# Arifureta: Volume 6

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## Chapter 1 : Once Again, In Brook Town

“Fufuh, your silliness, thoroughly show me how you sticky you get today!”

The crescent moon sometimes hidden by clouds illuminated the dark night. Even now, the face that possessed radiance peeped from above the clouds that was moved by the wind. That light began to illuminate a certain building on the ground. More accurately, a rope hanging from the roof of that building, and what was illuminated was a girl that displayed excellent rappelling skills, just like a special forces from somewhere.

*Surusuru*, as she descended to the corner of a window in a certain room on the third floor, she turned around. While being upside down. her face peered in from the upper part of the window.

“For today’s sake, I had Crystabel-san teach me her Climbing technique! I never thought of using it at this place, kukuku. Now, what kind of abnormal plays will you do, I will absolutely confirm it!”

“Haa haa,” rough breathing came from the excited girl as she focused on peeping into the room before her. Concealing herself, this girl was none other than Souna-chan; the inn girl of Brook Town’s “Masaka Inn”. Bright and energetic, able to talk without hesitation, and working hard all over the place. Even though she couldn’t be called beautiful, the inn girl was simply lovely just like a blooming flower on a plain. There was a considerable amount of single men targeting her in this town.

That girl was currently using all the techniques she knew to “peep” on certain guests with all her might. If her expression was seen by the men who fell for her would make them instantly feel as if they’d been disillusioned… … It was as if she was a perverted old man.

“Kuh, it is dark after all. I can’t see anything. If only the angle shifted a little more…”

“Like this?”

“That’s right, if it’s from this angle… … Even so, isn’t it too quiet? Even I thought I’d hear more moaning…”

“Isn’t it possible to use magic to intercept the sound?”

“Hah!? There is also that move! Kuu, how crafty! But, I won’t give up! Even if it’s only their silliness, I’ll burn it into my eyes…”

Just saying this once more, here was outside the window on the third floor. Even if Souna was an idiot to the limits, she couldn’t believe she’d hear a voice from nearby. Souna

instantly sweated like a waterfall, and *gigigi*, turned around with an awkward movement just like a machine that was forgotten to be oiled. There was…

Hajime standing in the sky like a Niou statue, with a cold smile plastered across his face.

“I-ich not what you think, you know? Dear customer. This is, that’s, umm, right! A regular inn maintenance!”

“Hou~, in the middle of the night?”

“Th-that’s right~. Look, if I don’t do it some time in the middle of the night, such as during the day, the repair work will end up being seen. Because it’s an inn, there will be some backlash, right?”

“I see, isn’t reputation an important thing?”

“Th-that’s right! Reputation is important!”

“By the way, apparently there is a peeping tom in this inn. Do you know something about it?”

“Th-that’s a serious situation! T-to peep, th-that’s unforgivable, right?”

“Aa, just as you said. Isn’t peeping unforgivable?”

“E, ee, it is unforgivable I think…”

Hajime and Souna looked at each others’ faces and “Hahaha”, “Fufufu”, laughed together. However, Hajime’s eyes weren’t laughing, and even though Souna was laughing, she was trembling a little while sweat continued to drop.

“Die.”

“Hii—, I am sor~ry.”

Hajime suddenly reverted to his serious look and iron clawed Souna’s face. *Merimeri*, sounds came from Hajime’s fingers. Souna who could only flail around in the air, let out a scream and desperately asked for forgiveness. Souna is an ordinary girl. That’s why Hajime adjusted his power to a level that wouldn’t overdo the punishment. If this was her first offense, then he would’ve be more lenient. But the day after he returned from the Raisen Great Dungeon, and every night since they checked into the inn, she kept trying to peep using various methods. That’s why his leniency was fading. By the way, the reason they were still staying at this inn was because the food was delicious.

Hajime could only let out a sigh and carry Souna, who was now only capable of twitching, in his arm. Souna was finally able to let out a relieved sigh when her face was released. But, when she looked down… … there were devils. Even though there were smiles on their faces, they were her parents that looked like devils whose eyes didn’t smile, just like Hajime’s.

“Hii!!”

They noticed that Souna had seen them. She was slowly descending while her parents raised their hands to receive her. It was just like an invitation to hell.

“This time, it’ll probably be forgiven only after a hundred spankings.”
“Iyaaaa—!”

Towards Hajime’s words, Souna remembered her punishments up to now, and was screaming. Surely, at breakfast the next day, he’ll see Souna rubbing her swelling butt with teary eyes. Every night and every morning, Hajime could only sigh at such spectacles.

* * *

Having handed Souna over to her parents, Hajime returned to his room and collapsed onto his bed.

“… … Thanks for your hard work.”
“Welcome home.”

The ones who greeted Hajime were of course Yue and Shia. The room was illuminated by moonlight shining in through the windows, and the pair fleeting figures could be seen. The girls sitting on the opposite bed were Yue and also Shia who sat shamelessly. Only wearing negligees, their appearances were somewhat lascivious. Coupled with their beautiful faces, if they were drawn on a painting, it’d be described as a masterpiece even by a second-class writer.

“Ou. Even so, what on earth drives that child… … to even climb down from the roof, that’s not normal, right? As expected, no matter how delicious the food, we should search for another inn.”

Hajime spoke with an amazed tone. Standing up, Shia laughed and sat on Hajime’s bed. Yue also steadily stood up and moved to Hajime’s bed, then she put her knees below Hajime’s head. As the result, they became lap pillows.

“Surely, our relationship has ignited the flames inside that Souna-chan’s girly mind. It can’t be helped for her to be curious about us. Isn’t that cute.”

“… … but, for her to become more and more skillful… … it worries me.”

“Yesterday, she used a handmade snorkel tube to hide at the bottom of the bathtub… … When I saw her glaring and sparkling eyes, it made me shiver.”

“U~n, certainly, that’s bad manners for an inn’s daughter… … For now, it’s only towards us but…”

While they chatted about Souna’s eccentric behaviors, Shia quietly drew her body near Hajime. She naturally extended her hand, then guided Hajime’s hand towards her breast. Shia’s face turned crimson, and she was nervous at what might happen from this situation.

Hajime gently grasped Shia's hand back. Kyuh, he put in more power that made Shia's body respond with a twitch. Because she was happy, she also put her power into her grasp. Hajime continued to put more strength into his grasp.

*Kyuh… PIKUNh, Gyuh… BIKUNh, GIRIh… BIKUBIKU, MISHIh… GAKUBURU*

"Wa-! Hajime-san! It will be crushed! My hand will be crushed!"

*MEKyah!*

"Hii—! I am sorry, I am really sorry! I just got a little carried away! That's why release it! It'll break! I'm going to break if you do anymore than this!"

"What are you trying to do by casually making a good mood? To begin with, your room is next door. So why are you here?"

Towards her hand that was gripped by Hajime, Shia tried to somehow release it while trembling, but she couldn't release it because of the vise-like grasp.

"Th-that's, I was just wondering~ if I can get into the same bed ☆, something like that. Rather, our relationship is already at the stage where we kiss. It's okay if it's only that much."

"As if. Even though I have said it was a life-saving action."

"Well, from my intuition, Hajime-san has started to become dere! Compared to the beginning, you've become very gentle! Because that is a fact, then… … Guhehe *"MEKHOBAKIh"* Doon't—! It's going to break—!"

Unable to endure hearing Shia's rude plans, Hajime inadvertently put more power into his grip. Shia whose hand was released, trembled at the edge of the bed while crouching and holding her hand to endure the pain. Ignoring Shia, Hajime turned his glance toward Yue. Yue immediately looked straight at Hajime.

"Rather, Yue. Recently, aren't you too lenient? Did you have a change of heart?"

Yue tilted her head and thought about Hajime's questions. Just as Hajime said, having returned from Raisen's Great Dungeon, Yue's attitude towards Shia become more lenient. Before, when Shia tried to stick to Hajime she'd immediately blow her away without arguing, but recently she didn't say anything about Shia's skinship. Even so, if it was something excessive… … for example when Shia tried to kiss him, she'd immediately become displeased…

"… … Shia did her best. She'll continue doing that from now on. Because she likes Hajime and me."

"Nn? Well, that's so…"

"… … I also… … don't hate her."

“No matter what, you’re actually getting along well. I can understand that just by watching. Nn~”

The main point that Hajime guessed from Yue’s few words, Yue was pleased by Shia, but not at the level of thinking of her as someone important.

That was the truth. Inside Raisen’s Great Dungeon was magic power disintegration that was even stronger than in the ravine, so Yue was unable to display her full power. It was the same with Hajime. They could guess how much hardship they’d have experienced if it were just the two of them. Surely, Hajime alone would be able to clear it, in exchange, the probability of him using one or two Holy Waters was high. To be able to conquer it without consuming them could be considered as thanks to Shia.

Just a little while ago, Shia was an existence that had no connection to fighting. Rather than being unrelated, it was more like she disliked it. This girl was surely frightened and uneasy, but she kept following Hajime and Yue without complaining. They went into the hell-like Great Dungeon, and while grinding her teeth, she was finally able to beat it with a splendid result.

She was single-mindedly doing that for the sake of her love towards Hajime, and her friendship toward Yue. Because she wanted to be together with them, Shia had changed herself and advanced ahead with all her might.

Yue of course held jealousy and a desire to monopolize him. Therefore, Shia’s feelings towards Hajime were not easily acknowledged. That’s why, at first, although it was hard to support it… … towards Shia who’s able to jump straight even after being treated cruelly, friendship was spread after so many times, following that it was further proven by how they conquered the Great Dungeon… … that became the tangible proof.

If she thought about it, Yue had no memory of anyone she could call her friend. Before she was sealed, she was busy with studying politics. There was no one who could be her friend on equal footing. In other words, she was alone. That’s why, toward Shia who said, “We are comrades~!”, straight without being two faced, excluding the parts about Hajime, from the beginning she was unable to hate her.

Because of that, regarding Hajime recently, “Well, if it is Shia then just a little…”, she showed her generosity.

“… … Even so.”
“Nn?”

Yue looked up at Hajime while continuing her words. Her eyes were bewitching and filled with sincerity, confidence, and resolution. Added to Yue’s gleaming smile that also reflected all of the above, she was so lovely, so charming, and made Hajime instinctively hold his breath. As if she was possessing gravity, Hajime was unable to move his glance and could only look at her in admiration. Hajime once again returned the look at Yue.

“… … Hajime’s heart is already mine.”

“… …”

No matter who else loves Hajime, no matter who else came to be attached to him, the number one, the most important is… … me. There was such a declaration. Yue's declaration of war. A declaration of war toward those they had, and would meet from now on.

Hajime was speechless. He was sucked in by the radiance of her eyes, Yue once again as if entwined by him, caught Hajime's glance. Following that, Hajime's hand touched Yue's cheek, while Yue put her hand over his. The moonlight reflected their shadows on the wall, their shadows slowly became closer. Then, at the moment they almost met…

"Gusuh, umm, can you at least please stop forgetting my existence? It feels so empty and lonely… … *gusuh*."

Shia was sitting while holding her knees on the corner of the bed; while crying and wiping her tears she watched Hajime and Yue create a world for two people.

It was a truly pitiful appearance, Hajime felt somewhat bad, and Yue was telling her to come closer. "Yue-zaa~n", while shouting that, Shia dived into Yue's bosom and sniffled. Shia's head was gently stroked, and because it felt pleasant she closed her eyes, then started to sleep just like that.

Hajime who saw their appearance could only wryly smile and say,

"Rather than a friend, aren't you more like a mother?"

"… … I prefer Hajime's child."

"… …"

"… … Won't you be gentler to Shia?"

"… … About that, I'll do my best."

"Nn… … I love you"

"… … Ou"

In the end, with Shia on his left side and Yue on his right side, the three of them fell asleep. After this day, Shia who was allowed to be in the same room would dance in ecstasy, and get carried away by repeatedly trying to attack Hajime every night, only to be severely punished by him.

By the way, at the time Shia screamed when her hand was grasped, Souna who heard that further intensified her misunderstanding, curiosity, and her delusions. Then she became an inn girl that possessed high infiltration skills… … but this was another story.

* * *

*KARAN, KARAN*

Accompanied by the sound of bells, the door of the adventurer's guild: Brook's branch opened. Three silhouettes entered, they were Hajime, Yue, and Shia who had completely become celebrities after several days. Inside the guild's cafe, several adventurers spend their time freely just like usual, but there were some who greeted Hajime and his party by raising a hand when they noticed them. As for the men, they looked at Yue and Shia as usual, then turned their glances filled with envy toward Hajime, but there were no malicious ones here.

They had stayed at Brook town for a week, there were several people who didn't learn and caused a commotion by challenging him to a duel to obtain Yue or Shia during that time. In the past, they were unable to persuade Yue who was known as "Crotch Smasher" because they were frightened by her, as such they tried to capture Hajime and bury him outside the moat.

Of course, Hajime wouldn't do something as troublesome as that. Finally, "Duel me!", when the line was only on "Duel," he already fired the gun. What shot out was a non-lethal rubber bullet that exploded as it hit the pitiful challenger's head, and made him spin three times, then kiss the ground.

Because of that, in the town, Yue the "Crotch Smasher" and her loved person, the one who was capable of killing his enemy in a blink before the duel even started, Hajime the "Duel Smasher" combination became famous people to be reckoned. Even though they didn't apply a party name to the guild, the name "Smasher Lovers" already spread, and Hajime who discovered their nickname could only look off into the distance for a while, because of this new memory.

By the way, as a side note, Shia who felt her existence become thinner could only shed tears.

"Oya, the three of you are together today?"

Hajime and his party approached the counter, just as usual, aunt… … Catherine was there, and she was the one that greeted them just now. Catherine's voice was filled with surprise because in this one week the ones who came to guild were usually either Hajime alone or Shia and Yue as a pair.

"Aa. We'll leave the town tomorrow, and because we are indebted to you, we came to greet you. Furthermore, we thought of accepting it if you have any commissions related to our destination"

What he meant by indebted, was how Hajime had borrowed a guild's room for free. Because he finally gained Gravity magic, he wanted to experiment: combining it with Creation magic, that's why he needed a spacious room. Catherine who happened to hear about it offered the use of a guild room for free.

It should be noted that Yue and Shia trained to use gravity magic on the town's outskirts.

"I see. So you're going to leave. That'll make me lonely. It's been lively since you came back here after all~"

"Please give me a break. There is a pervert in the inn, there is also a pervert in the dress store, there are also those perverts who start to prostate when Yue and Shia walk in town and

stalker perverts who call them “Onee-sama,” there were also idiots who challenged me to duels… … there were no decent fellows at all. Of all the guys I met, 70% are perverts and 20% are idiots… … just what’s wrong with this town”

All of the complaints that Hajime said while scowling were the truth. Let alone Souna, everytime Hajime met Crystabel, she always licked her lips while looking at him like a carnivore, he already forgot how many times he felt chills.

Moreover, there were three major factions created inside Brook town, they tried to compete with each other every day. One was the “We want to be stepped on by Yue-chan corps”, the other was the “We want to be Shia-chan’s slaves corps,” and the last one was the “We want to be onee-sama’s siblings corps”. Respectively, they literally hold those as their wishes, and it seems they competed on which side would be the majority.

Hajime and his party could only spurt out their drinks because those names were the opinion of the masses. Suddenly there were people inside the town prostrating to Yue saying “Please step on us!” It made her shiver. It was not known how extreme their thought processes were to be like that for Shia. The demi-human race should have been under discrimination, so the way they wanted to become her slaves was a full chance for tsukkomi, but she immediately refused them because it was unpleasant to think deeply about it. The last was a group of only women, maybe because they saw him as an obstruction to Yue and Shia, they mainly tried to eliminate Hajime. Once, “The harmful and parasitic pest to Onee-sama! I’ll remove his ballssss—!!”, a girl screamed that while thrusting a knife toward him in one hand.

Because it’d be troublesome to kill a girl inside town after all, Hajime only left that girl naked in a tortoise shell-like bondage (because he had no knowledge about it) situation, after hanging her on the highest building, and leaving after sticking on a piece of paper that read, “I’ll kill you next time.” Because of the indifferent content in the paper he left behind, the girls’ extreme actions became more hidden, and that’s a good thing.

Hajime who recalled those events could only frown, while Catherine let out a bitter smile.

“Now, now, the lively part is the truth.”
“Right, it sure is.”
“Then, where are you going?”
“Fhuren”

Even though they talked in that manner, Catherine was working diligently. Immediately, she started searching whether there was a request related to Fhuren.

Fhuren was a neutral commercial city. Hajime and his party’s next destination was “Guryuen Great Desert”, where one of the Seven Great Dungeons; “Guryu-en Volcanic Mountain”, resided. Therefore, they must go toward the west of the continent, and on the way was the “Neutral Commercial City Fhuren”, so they wanted to drop by the continent’s number one commercial city. It should be noted that after “Guryu-en Volcanic Mountain”, their next destination was further west of the Great Desert, the Great Dungeon that had sunk into the seabed; “Meljine Seabed Ruin”.

“U~n, oh my. I found something good. A request to escort a merchant company. There’s a vacancy for one person… … How is it? Are you going to accept?”

Hajime confirmed the contents of the commission he received from Catherine. Certainly, the content was a request to escort a merchant company. It was a medium-scale merchant company, and it seemed to request 15 people as the escorts. Because Yue and Shia were not adventurers, it was perfect for Hajime.

“Is it OK to take my companions along?”

“Aa, no problem. Although there would be complaints if there are too many people, but there are people hired to carry the luggage, and there are also adventurers who brought their slaves along. Furthermore, Yue-chan and Shia-chan are also influential people. To have another two excellent adventurers in addition when hiring a person. There’s no reason to refuse.”

“I see, nn~, what should we do?”

Hajime who was a little hesitant, looked back at Yue and Shia to ask for their opinions. Truthfully, he thought of accepting the request if it had something to do with delivering packages. If it had been only Hajime and his party, they could have used the Magic-Driven vehicle and arrived at Fhuren much sooner than if they had to use a carriage. It would be too troublesome to match the pace of the others in an escort mission.

“… … No need to travel in a rush.”

“That’s right~, sometimes it may be good to go with other adventurers. We might be able to learn the know-how from the veteran adventurers, right?”

“… … That’s true. Since we aren’t in a hurry, sometimes it might be good…”

Having heard their opinions, Hajime was, “Fumu”, and told Catherine that he accepted the request. It was just as Yue had said, it would take a lot of time to conquer the Seven Great Dungeons. There’s no telling what kind of mistake they might make if they tried to rush it. That’s why the know-how peculiar to adventurers would likely be useful in their future travels, as Shia had said.

“Here you go. I’ll notify the client, so please go to the front gate tomorrow, first thing in the morning.”

“Roger.”

After she confirmed that Hajime received the application form, Catherine turned her eyes toward Yue and Shia who were behind him.

“You must keep yourself healthy, okay? Whenever this child makes you cry, please come back here. I’ll beat him for you.”

“… … Nn, we are indebted to you. Thanks.”

“Yes, Catherine-san. Thank you very much for taking care of us!”

Catherine’s kind-filled words made Yue and Shia smile. Shia was especially happy. She seemed to have forgotten that she was of the demi-human race, ever since she arrived at this

town. Of course, there were different strokes for different blokes. Not all of them were friendly in regards to Shia, but with Catherine at the top, there were Souna, Crystabel, and some people like her fans, who didn't discriminate against her, even though she was a demi-human. It was not known whether that was because of the locality or the people's nature or the flow of this town, but for Shia, this was a warm place, almost like her hometown in the Sea of Trees.

"You too, don't you let these good girls cry, okay? I'll punish you if you don't value them as the most important, alright?"

"… … Geez, what a meddlesome person. I'll do that even without you telling me."

Hajime replied to Catherine's words with a wry smile. Catherine held out a letter towards Hajime. With a doubtful expression, Hajime received the letter.

"This is?"

"You're carrying various problems in your arms after all. It is an apology for all the trouble caused by the people of this town. When you arrive at another town's guild and get into trouble, show this letter to the person in-charge. It might prove to be useful."

Catherine perfectly added a wink, and Hajime's cheeks inadvertently cramped. "For a letter to be able to influence the person in-charge, just who on earth are you?", his doubt could be seen in his expression.

"Oh my, is there a need to investigate me? A good woman is someone that holds secrets, after all."

"… … Haa, un'stood. I will gladly take it."

"It's good to be obedient! Although a lot of things might happen, please don't die."

Catherine was a staff of the guild in a remote countryside town, and held a lot of mysteries. She sent Hajime and his party off with a charming smile that contained attractiveness.

Afterwards, Hajime and his party drew near Crystabel's place. Although Hajime refused to come along, he could only reluctantly come because of Yue and Shia… … but, the moment it heard that they wanted to leave town, Crystabel became a huge monster, and tried to attack Hajime, since this was her (Crystabel's) last chance. Hajime, who was so scared, used the oscillation fracture to bury it. Although Yue and Shia were able to desperately stop the traumatic event… … The details will be omitted.

When she heard it was their last night, Souna finally managed to trespass into the bathroom with a dignified demeanor. That action was followed by her charging into their room, then her parents, who were completely angered by her, tied her with genuine tortoise shell bondage all night long. The event where she was hung in front of the inn would be omitted. The reason why her parents knew how to tie the tortoise shell bondage will also be omitted.

The next morning.

With pleasant memories of Brook's townspeople, Hajime and his party arrived at the front of the gate, moved towards the merchant company's facilitator and other adventurers who accepted the escort request. Apparently they were the last ones to arrive. When the facilitator-like person and the 14 adventurers looked at the incoming Hajime and his party, they caused a commotion at once.

"O-Oi, don't tell me the remaining three are the "Sma-Love"!?

"It's true! Although it makes me happy and frightened at the same time!"

"Look at my hands. They haven't stopped trembling since a while ago, you know?"

"Wait, isn't it because you're drunk?"

There were those who were happy with Yue and Shia's appearance, some hid their groin with both hands while teary-eyed, and one with trembling hands who got tsukkomi'ed by his companion, various reactions. Hajime approached them with a very displeased expression, then the facilitator-like person called out to him.

"Are you the last escorts?"
"Aa, this is the application."

Hajime showed the application that he took out of his chest pocket. After confirming it, the male facilitator nodded in consent and began to introduce himself.

"My name is Mottou Junker. I am the leader of this merchant company. Although your rank is still blue, I heard you're excellent adventurers from Catherine-san. I expect you to escort us along the way."

"… … Motto(more) Yunker ? … … It must be difficult to be the leader of a merchant company… …"

*[T/N: Yunker is a Japanese formulated energy and health supplement.]*

It was a name that reminded him of a certain health tonic from Japan, and Hajime's eyes were filled with sympathy. Mottou, who was unable to understand why Hajime looked at him with such eyes, only inclined his neck and replied with, "Well, it was difficult but I've become accustomed to it," as if he was wryly smiling..

"Well, I won't betray your expectations. I am Hajime. Here are Yue and Shia."

"That's reassuring… … By the way, this person from the Rabbitman tribe… … Won't you sell her? I can only pay a moderate price though."

Mottou glanced at Shia while appraising her. She was a beautiful girl of the Rabbitman tribe who wasn't blue-haired like the normal Rabbitman tribe member, but possessed gray hair instead. As a merchant's nature, he couldn't help but lay his hands on such a rare commodity. He judged her as a slave from her collar, then immediately proposed negotiation to Hajime; the owner. Surely he must be an excellent merchant.

Having received the glance, Shia, “Ugh,” groaned unpleasantly and hid behind Hajime. Yue looked at Mottou with a severe look. The popular perception of a Rabbitman tribe outside the Sea of Trees was a slave, that’s why it was natural to offer trade negotiations for such an unusual slave. There was no reason to blame Mottou.

“Hoo, she seems fairly attached… … somehow, she also seems to be cherished. Then, I will give you some discounts, how about it?”

“Well, since you seem to be an excellent merchant… … shouldn’t you already know the answer?”

Although Mottou, who had seen Shia’s appearance, was interested and offered a more appealing proposal, Hajime’s reply was simple. Nevertheless, Mottou felt he should not let go of this chance to negotiate with Hajime, since it will surely bring forth large profit that will only increase thanks to Shia’s charm. That’s why, he tried to give out more bargaining chips to lengthen their conversation.

However, Hajime had read his intentions. Though they were simple words, he voiced them to Mottou with an unwavering will.

“Even if it was god who wanted her, I still wouldn’t let her go… … Won’t you understand with this much?”

“… … … … Ee, I understand. It can’t be helped. I’ll withdraw here. However, if you ever change your mind, by all means please visit my Junker company. Well then, it’s almost time to depart. For the details on escorting, please ask the leader over there.”

Hajime’s words were actually dangerous ones. If it was done unskillfully, his words would have branded him as a heretic by the Church of the Saints. As a side note, the demon race believes in a different god, they worshipped different gods than the strongest god in history; “Ehito”, but they didn’t directly try to fight the Church of the Saints. Since Hajime didn’t drastically alter his words, therefore, Mottou understood that Hajime, from the bottom of his heart, refused to let Shia go.

Hajime watched as Mottou dejectedly returned to his merchant company, then he noticed the surroundings become noisy again.

“Wow… … For the sake of a woman, to even say that much… … It numbed me!”

“As expected of Duel Smasher. He won’t forgive anyone who puts their hands on his woman… … fuh, what a man.”

“That’s nice~, I also wanted someone to say something like that to me at least once.”

“Wait, you, aren’t you a man? Who would, say someth—, sorry, I am sorry, so sto— Ah——!!”

Having heard the happy conversations of his amused escort companions, Hajime could only hold his head in his hands due to the headache. All of the fellows from Brook town were

idiots as expected. While he thought that, *'Munyuu'*, he could feel something soft on his back, furthermore Hajime was embraced closely by the arms that came from behind him.

Hajime turned his head over his shoulder, and saw a close-up of Shia's face as she rested her chin on his shoulder. Her face completely dyed red, and because she was truly happy, her expression loosened.

"… … Listen, there was no special meaning to it, so don't misunderstand, okay?"
"Ufufufu, I know~, ufufufu~"

Although Hajime explained that, in the end it was akin to not abandoning a relative, and not because "she is his woman", like the surrounding people noisily described. His explanation was not transmitted to Shia. It was because the man she fell for had declared that "Even if it's god, I won't let her go." No matter what his real intentions were by declaring that, a pleasant thing is pleasant.

Even though those words were to quickly break off the negotiation, in a lot of ways it was "overkill," and Hajime could only feel regret. Yue *tokotoko*, went to Hajime's side, then *kuikui*, she pulled Hajime's sleeve.

"? What is it, Yue?"

"Nn… … Don't worry about it, because that was cool."

"… … Thanks for the consolation."

Having sympathized with Hajime's feelings, Yue tried to comfort him, and Hajime gently stroked her cheeks while letting out words of gratitude. Yue closed her eyes as if she was pleased by it.

In front of the front gate early in the morning, inside a crowd of people, with a beautiful rabbit-eared girl that looked so happy attached to his back, and another beautiful blonde girl with crimson eyes in his right hand, was Nagumo Hajime.

The ladies of the merchant company looked at them with lukewarm expressions, while the men looked at the spectacle with dead-fish eyes. Toward these annoying gazes and words that pierced Hajime, surely he just reaped what he had sown.

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## Chapter 2 : Adventurer-like Work

Using carriages, the distance between Brook Town and the Neutral Commercial City; Fhuren, was six days of travel.

They moved before sunrise and prepared to camp before sunset. This has already repeated for three days. Hajime and his party were three days away from Fhuren. Only half the travel distance remained. So far no incidents had occurred during their journey. Even though Hajime and his party were in charge of the rear, it was truly peaceful.

Even today, nothing special happened as they prepared to camp. Regarding meals, the adventurers were eating by themselves. They had to eat while minding their surroundings, that's why, as escorts they couldn't settle down when eating together. It also seemed to be the rule to eat on their own. Additionally, when on a mission, the adventurers only eat cruel, simple meals. In a way, preparing tasty meals would only increase their luggage, and would disturb them in emergency situations. Because of that, it became a theory that after they've arrived at a town they would eat tasty meals until their stomachs were full, as their reward.

That story was something Hajime and his party heard from the adventurers when they ate meals on the second day. Hajime and his party had prepared warm bread soaked in luxurious mock stew to eat.

"Gah—, good! It is truly delicious~, just as expected of Shia-chan! Mou, I don't care if you're a demi-human anymore, so will you be my wife?"

"*Gluck gluck, gulp*, puhah, bastard, don't just run your mouth! Shia-chan is my wife!"

"Hah, just what is a small dirty pig-like man like you trying to say? Know your place. By the way Shia-chan, how about a meal with me after we arrive at the town? Of course, it'll be my treat."

"Th-Then, I'll take Yue-chan! Yue-chan, have a meal with me!"

"Yue-chan's spoon… … Haa, haa."

The adventurers kept eating the mock stew made by Shia, saying it was delicious. On the first day, these guys were eating dried meat with things similar to camping goods when, Hajime and his party started to cook next to them, using ingredients and tableware taken out from "Treasure Box", just as usual. The adventurers were attracted by the delicious drifting aromas. Looking around, they saw Hajime and his party eating the hot meal while blowing on it, nearby. It became a situation where all of the other adventurers stared at them with blood-shot eyes and drooling mouths. Shia who felt that they were truly pitiful proposed to share their meals, resulting in the current situation.

In the beginning, even in front of these starving dogs, Hajime continued to calmly eat his meal. Naturally, he didn't intend to share at all. However, because Shia took over the job of preparing the meals when they camp, he had to rely on her to make delicious meals. It was not like Hajime and Yue were incapable of cooking anything, but the taste would be flat. Hajime was only capable of making manly dishes while Yue was inexperienced, being a former noble. That's why, it was not an easy thing for Hajime to refuse Shia's, who was able to cook delicious meals, proposal to share.

From then on, although at first the adventurers that crowded like hyena during meals were grateful, they started to get carried away and jokingly tried to persuade Shia and Yue.

Toward the adventurers who made such a ruckus, Hajime silently used “Pressure”. Although their bodies should have been warmed up by the hot mock stew, the adventurers immediately felt the chill and could only stand still with pale expressions. Hajime swallowed the meat inside his mouth and glanced at the mock stew while slowly letting out a whisper. Even so his voice could be clearly heard by everyone.

“So? Having filled your belly, who’s the guy that wants to be thrown?”

“”””””I am sorry for getting carried away.”””””””

The adventurers apologized while prostrating in splendid harmony and synchronization. Although these guys were senior and veteran adventurers compared to Hajime, they had no dignity at all. Even though there was also the “Pressure” that Hajime used, it wasn’t like they would go against Hajime, because they knew what happened in Brook town.

“Mou, Hajime-san. Since it’s finally time for a meal, a little ruckus is fine. A-Also, no matter what they say, I-I am Hajime-san’s, you know?”

“I never cared about that.”

“Hau!?”

Although Shia tried to casually appeal to Hajime while feeling shy, Hajime cut off her words with a single phrase.

“… … Hajime.”

“Nn?… … What is it, Yue?”

Because of Yue’s criticizing glance, Hajime flinched a little. Yue pointed her forefinger and said, “… … bad!”. In short, it was about his promise from before to be nicer to Shia. Hajime, who didn’t harbor love for Shia even now, thought it was enough to treat her as a relative… … however it seemed that was an out for Yue.

“Hajime-san! If you keep that attitude, I won’t give you the “well-done” skewered meat!”

Following that, recently Shia was not as easily discouraged. She didn’t even twitch at Hajime’s tsun-remark. Even if she received the shock, she immediately revived and repeated her strong and positive approach.

“… … Like I said, how did you know that mate-… … no, it’s nothing. I understand, so quickly hand over the meat.”

“Fufu, do you want to eat it? Th-Then, a~n”

“… …”

While blushing, Shia presented the well-done skewered meat in front of Hajime’s mouth. He seemed to really want to eat it. That’s why Hajime took a peek at Yue. Yue readily stood by his side with skewered meat at hand. Probably, she would follow after Shia’s “A~n”.

While feeling the adventurers' gazes, Hajime let out a sigh then opened his mouth toward Shia. Shia's expression was dyed in happiness.

"A~n."
"… …"

Hajime bit then chewed the presented meat in silence. Shia's expression was in pure bliss while she looked at Hajime. Then, this time another skewered meat was presented from his other side.

"… … A~n."
"… …"

He once again took a bite. Silently chewed it. Again, he took a bite when Shia from his other side, "A~n". He bit again when Yue said "A~n".

Their subjectivity aside, the voices of the men's hearts who had objectively seen this spectacle were splendidly unified. In their minds, "We beseech you, please just explode already!!". They could only use formal words in their minds because they were clearly shown that they couldn't do anything in face of Hajime's power .

Two days had passed since then. The distance was only one more day of travel, finally someone appeared to inelegantly obstruct their travel and to assault them.

Shia was the first to notice it. Her rabbit ears, piko piko, moved while pointing toward the forest beside the highway, her unconcerned expression suddenly tightened and she warned the others.

"Incoming enemies! They number more than 100! They'll come from the forest!"

When they heard her warning, the tension between the adventurers immediately increased. The highway that they were currently advanced on was not known for the danger from the adjacent forest. After all, it was the only route to the one Neutral Commercial City in the continent. The highway was safe, was what was guaranteed. That's why, although there were stories of encountering demonic beasts, they were only 20, at most. Even if there were a lot of them, 40 was the limit.

"Shit, more than 100 you say? Recently, I haven't heard stories of assault. are they saving up their power for this time's sake? Damn, even though I had investigated about accidents along the highway!"

The leader of the escorts, Galitima, was cursing with a bitter expression. The escorts of the merchant company numbered 15. If Yue and Shia were included, they became 17 people. Considering the number of people, it'd be difficult to flawlessly defend the merchant company. It was simply because they were overwhelmed in number.

By the way, for them to calculate Shia as a combat potential despite knowing the Rabbitman tribe's gentle nature was because there was a time when Shia lost her temper by the extreme actions of the "We want to be Shia-chan's slaves corps". She blew off those perverts at once, that became well-known to adventurers and made them awe.

The moment Galitima started thinking of letting the majority of the escorts stay and at least making the merchant company escape, a proposal's voice rang out and interrupted his thinking.

"If you're perplexed, should we kill them?"
"Eh?"

It was said with a light-hearted tone, as if he was just going to go for a little shopping. The unbelievable proposal came from none other than Hajime. Galitima was able to grasp the significance of Hajime's proposal, then spontaneously asked back with a stupid voice.

"Like I said, shall we annihilate them?"

"W-Well, that's certainly, because it'll be difficult to flawlessly defend the merchant company if this keeps up… … umm, can you do it? Although there are no strong demonic beasts around here, their numbers are…"

"There is no problem with the numbers. It'll end soon. With Yue, that is."

Hajime said that and immediately put his hand on Yue's shoulder who moved beside him. Yue looked particularly eager, and as if it would be very easy work for her, she replied with "Nn…".

Galitima hesitated a little. At least he had heard the rumors that Yue was a user of rare magic. For argument's sake, even if she couldn't completely annihilate them, from the attitude of Hajime and his party they should be able to cut down a reasonable number. That's why, rather than letting the merchant company escape ahead using their various combat potential, he steadily thought of another strategy.

"I understand. I'll entrust the first strike to Yue. Even if you can't completely annihilate them, it'll be no problem as long as their numbers considerably decrease. Then, we only need to decrease them further with our magic, and beat the last of them directly. Everyone, you understand!?"

"""""Affirmative!"""""

The other adventurers replied to Galitima's decision with voices filled with spirit. Apparently, it seemed they couldn't believe Yue was able to annihilate them alone. Hajime thought in his mind, "There is no need to worry that much~", but because it was not common sense for magic-users to be capable of annihilating more than a hundred of demonic beasts, he felt their judgement couldn't be helped as he shrugged his shoulders.

The adventurers took a united line in front of the merchant company. Although tension hung in the air, their faces were resolute. There was no remaining joking atmosphere, like the one during meal time. On the way, even though they had heard various stories from the veteran adventurers, only by seeing their current appearance, indeed, they were able to nod and acknowledge them as veterans. The people of the merchant company were frightened when they heard the large number of demonic beasts, now their faces peeped in from the shadows of the carriages.

Hajime and his party were on the roof of the merchant company's carriage.

"Yue, for now, start chanting. If not, it'll become troublesome."

"… … Chant… … chant… …?"

"… … Did you not know any?"

"… … Don't worry, there's no problem."

"Well, that material… … It's nothing."

"Contact in 10 seconds~"

Because it'd be troublesome if others inquired about it, Hajime told Yue to use chants, but Yue who originally had no need to chant was only able to float "?" above her head. Even so, it would be good as long as she made them assume she was chanting by whispering, although there shouldn't be any big problems, her reply somehow made Hajime anxious.

While he thought of that, Shia's report rang out. Yue, suh, turned and hung her right hand toward the forest, then her chanting voice began to permeate.

"You are the one who brought bright red light into this perpetual darkness, crush the prison of old, the one who met face on as an equal, using the power of the strongest fragment, together with him, become the light capable of swallowing heaven, "Thunder Dragon""

With the end of Yue's chant, she pulled the magic's trigger. At that moment, a dragon made of thunder appeared from the dark cloud just like in her chant. Its appearance was reminiscent of a snake just like an oriental dragon.

"Wh-What's that…"

It wasn't known who muttered that. Even with the crowd of demonic beasts in front of their eyes, everyone's gazes were fixated at the sky towards the bizarre thunder dragon that let out blue electrical discharge. Even those who were well-versed in magic in the rear, could only open and close their mouths towards the magic they've never seen nor heard before.

Then, as if it was no one's ally. The demonic beasts that had come with killing intent for their prey from the forest, came to a halt between the merchant company and the forest, having been glared at by the huge thunder dragon, it was as if they were frogs that were stiffened by a snake's glare.

Following that, as if it was heaven's judgement, Yue flicked her slender and beautiful fingers, causing the thunder dragon opened its jaws that were even able to swallow heaven and attacked the demonic beasts.

*GOoGAaAAA!!!*

“Uwah!?”
“Dowaaa!?”
“Kyaaaaa!?”

The thunder dragon let out a tremendous roar from its huge opened mouth, and some demonic beasts were voluntarily jumping into the opened jaws. Then, they were eliminated by the jaws of thunder and disappeared without any resistance.

Furthermore, as Yue commanded, the thunder dragon coiled around the demonic beasts to encircle them. The demonic beasts that were in the middle of escaping penetrated that wall of thunder and turned into dust before their eyes. Once again, above the demonic beasts that had lost their escape route, the thunder dragon opened its jaws with a thundering roar, and the demonic beasts jumped into it as if they chose to die. Without any time to suffer the pain, their flesh turning into dust coupled with the majestic appearance of the dragon gave off a solemn atmosphere. Having swallowed all of the demonic beasts, the thunder dragon let out a thundering roar for the last time then disappeared.

Every one of the adventurers that were in formation and the merchant company, because of the flashes along with thundering sounds, and followed by a severe earthquake were inadvertently screaming and crouching. Finally, the fear of a life-threatening attack and the impact left them, and when they opened their eyes slightly to see what happened ahead… … there was nothing at all. There was only the ground, scorched in a coil-shape, it was proof that the unreal spectacle just now had truly occurred.

“… … Nn, I overdid it”

“Oioi, that magic, even I know nothing about it…”

“It is a Yue-san original, right? It seems to be a combination of magic that’s used in the stories of dragons from Hajime-san as a reference.”

“To have made something like this when I shut myself inside the guild… … Rather, Yue, the chant just now…”

“Nn… … A song of meeting and the future.”

Yue looked at Hajime with expressionlessness that gave off an, “How about that!”, atmosphere. She was probably proud of it because it was something she made herself. Hajime quietly used his hand to stroke Yue’s hair gently while letting out a wry smile. Having allowed her to finish the chant to avoid trouble, although it was completely meaningless, his caution disappeared once he saw Yue boasting about herself.

That was Yue’s original magic; “Thunder Dragon”. It’s a compound magic using the high-ranked magic; “Thunder Hammer” that creates a dark cloud then drops a huge amount of lightning, and Gravity magic. The lightning that originally just falls down was arbitrarily controlled using Gravity magic. To purposely make it form like a dragon from Hajime’s story was something made by magic using Yue’s sense. This thunder dragon was filled with gravity magic in the mouth’s parts, that’s why objects would be pulled toward it when its jaws were opened. This is why the demonic beasts looked like they voluntarily jumped toward it. Comparing its magic power, it was at the highest level even among high-ranked

magic, that's why just by looking at Yue's expression one could see that was the gem of her pride.

And, the adventurers who looked dumbfoundedly at the scorched ground began to regain their senses. Following that, they vigorously turned around to look at Hajime and his party, then started to make a commotion.

"Oioioioioi, what was that? What was, THAT!"

"A-A strange beast was… … from the sky… … from the sky… … ah, it's a dream."

"Hehe, I, once we arrive at the town, I am going to marry."

"I know how shaken you're, but calm down. Remember that you don't have a lover, not even a girlfriend."

"It can be made by magic! It's not even strange to make a strange beast like that! That's why I am not wrong!"

"Well, there is no magic related with the life and death cycle, you know? That's why this situation is abnormal, okay?"

"What!? Bastard, are you saying Yue-chan is abnormal!? Aan!?"

"Everyone, calm down! Listen, Yue-chan is a goddess, that'll explain everything!"

""""""Indeed!""""""

Maybe because Yue's magic left too much of an impact, the adventurers became a little broken. That couldn't be helped. After all, there was no existing magic that could take the shape of living things. Furthermore, that was even impossible to be used by the magic-users that were employed by the country. It could be said the thunder dropping magic; "Thunder Hammer", was only usable by ultra first-class magic-users.

Inside the broken adventurers that shouted, "All hail Yue-sama!", something along that line was the sole sane person; the leader Galitima, who could only sigh after looking at his comrades and approached Hajime and his party.

"Haa, first of all, thanks. Thanks to Yue-chan, we were able to get through with zero damage."

"We are co-workers now. There's no need to thank us. Right?"

"… … Nn, I am only doing my job."

"Haha, I see… … so, that is. What was that just now?"

Galitima asked without being able to hide his bewilderment.

"… … Original."

“O-Original? Do you mean a magic you created yourself? High-ranked magic, no, is that a highest-ranked magic?”

“… … I didn’t create it. It is a compound magic.”

“Compound magic? But, what on earth combines to make that…”

“… … That’s a secret”

“Kh… … That’s, well, it should be. No adventurers will simply reveal their trump card after all…”

Accompanied with a profound sigh, Galitima gave up the pursuit. He seemed to be sensitive to the tacit rule of veteran adventurers. While he shrugged his shoulders, he turned his attention to the broken comrades. “They would give birth to a new religion called the “Yue faith” if this keeps up, that’s why Galitima must work hard”, that’s what Hajime thought as a man.

While receiving gazes from everyone in the merchant company that were mixed with awe and respect, their group resumed their travels.

* * *

Since the time Yue removed the guts of every merchant company’s people and adventurers, she didn’t have anything to do at all, and their group finally arrived at the Neutral Commercial City; Fhuren.

There were six reception desks in Fhuren’s eastern gate, the goods that were brought would be checked there. Hajime and his party were queueing in one of the rows. It would take a while until their turn.

On the carriage’s roof, Mottou approached as Hajime laid down and rest his head on Yue’s lap pillow, while being attended by Shia. It seemed there was something he wanted to say. Mottou looked toward Hajime with a somewhat amazed look, then Hajime lightly nodded and jumped down from the roof.

“Geez, you’re so bold. Don’t you notice the surroundings’ eyes?”

Just as Mottou said, the surrounding eyes were the usual and familiar eyes that contained jealousy and envy toward Hajime, followed by eyes that are filled with wonder and hate toward Yue and Shia. In addition, currently the gazes that appraised Shia were increasing. As expected of a big city’s entrance gate. In the place where various men gathered, there were not only those who simply looked at Yue and Shia with dirty-minds but also those who looked at them as profit.

“Well, although they’re annoying, I can’t do anything about it. So, it’s useless to worry about it”

Hajime said that while shrugging his shoulders and Mottou could only put on a wry smile.

“There’ll be more trouble once you enter Fhuren. As expected, to sell her…”

Although Mottou tried to casually offer a trade for Shia, “Didn’t that conversation already end?”, was what was expressed by Hajime’s silence, and he could only raise a hand as a pose for giving up.

“You aren’t calling me for such talk, right? What business do you want?”

“Well, it is something like that. I’m offering a trade negotiation. It is about the artifacts that you carry. Will you sell those? When we arrive at my company, under the notary witness, I’ll pay the amount that can make someone live his whole life without working. Your artifacts, especially “Treasure Box” are something that merchants will desperately try to obtain after all.”

Along with the word “desperately,” Mottou’s unsmiling eyes were perfectly expressing “even if I have to kill.” It was because “Treasure Box” would be able to solve the problem of cheaply and securely mass transportation goods, that always became a concern in merchants’ heads. That’s why it was understandable.

When he saw various things taken out from the “Treasure Box” while camping, Mottou’s expression was as if someone who had wandered around for tens of days in the desert finally found an oasis while on the verge of dying. Because he persistently tried to negotiate, Hajime gave out slight bloodthirst and maybe because of his intuition as a merchant told him a warning, he withdrew dejectedly.

However, he was unable to give up after all. In front of Donner-Schlag, he was somehow able to approach Hajime and proposed another negotiation.

“I’ll say it again and again, I won’t sell any of it. Just give up.”

“But, those artifacts are too useful for an individual to carry. Isn’t it more reasonable for them to be used by someone who knows their value? If not, it’ll be much more troublesome… … for example, those girls wil—!?”

Mottou, for a little, took a peek toward Shia and Yue on the roof with a mad and threatening look and at that moment, *gochih*, something cold and hard was pressed on his forehead. That was accompanied with a sublime bloodthirst. No one in their surroundings noticed it. One of the reasons was because they were in the shadow of the carriage and also because Hajime had pinpointed his bloodthirst toward him.

“That, can I think of that as a declaration of war?”

That was said in a quiet voice. However, that voice that was as cold as ice made Mottou stiffen and the eyes of Hajime that peered into his eyes were just like thick darkness. Mottou’s whole body was drenched in cold sweat and he desperately let out his voice.

“Th-that’s wrong. Somehow… … because, guh… … I wouldn’t… … be able to hide about you… … that’s why, I said those… … words. That was all… … uh”

Just as Mottou said, Hajime didn't intend to seriously hide his artifacts and their ability. Because he had considered it a little to avoid troublesome things, there was the case of Yue's chant, but if it was reversed, if it was more than "a little," he didn't intend to hide it. Hajime had decided "to not hold back" against this world. He would mow all of his enemies down. He had the resolution to do that.

"I see, let's just leave it at that."

Having said that, Hajime put away Donner and dispersed his bloodthirst. Mottou crumbled on the spot. While drenched in sweat, he panted.

"Well, it's up to you on what you want to do. For example, even if you spread that to others, and those people took action, then I wouldn't care about it. However, if you became an enemy that tried to obstruct me… … Do you think you can survive? I don't care if it involves the country or even the world. I'll just sink everything into a sea of blood."

"… … Haa haa, indeed. It will be an unprofitable business…"

Although he was still pale-faced, Mottou who was capable of firmly replying, was an excellent merchant. Even from the interactions with the other merchant company members, he seemed to be quite adored. Normally, it would be impossible for him to take such a firm posture even now. The things that charmed and drove him mad were Hajime's artifacts.

"Well, this time I'll overlook it. But, there won't be a next time, okay?"

"… … For the love of god. It is me who has become senile. For me to kick the butt of a dragon in front of my eyes…"

"Kick the butt of a dragon" is a proverb of this world, it referred to the Ryuujin race and dragons. They boasted their defensive power as an impregnable defense because of their whole body covered by scales, excluding their eyes and mouth, the butt hole that wasn't covered by scales was their only weak point. Because of their high defense, as they were deep-sleepers, they wouldn't awaken once they fell asleep, but they would wake up at once, once their butt that was their weak point received stimulus, and became enraged like raging fires. A long time ago, it was not known why that was done, but the fool was completely crushed. From that, it became the meaning of someone who is foolish enough to purposely disturb someone that was harmless as long as they weren't disturbed.

By the way, the Ryuujin race was assumed to have perished more than 500 years ago. Although the reason was uncertain, these guys own a characteristic magic called "Dragon Form" that made them between the boundary of a person and demonic beast, there are various opinions such as they were turned into exclusion because of discrimination and they were weeded out by the gods as an incomplete race.

"Now that you mention it, Yue's magic from back then was imitating the dragon. Although I will apologize if that was truly a dragon, but it's good that no one knows anything about it. After all I also never heard anything about the Ryuujin race. Well, I think it'll be okay because it looks more like a snake than a dragon."

Mottou who somehow recovered, managed to stand up and he advised Hajime while tidying his clothes. He was a somewhat bold person. Although he was going to be killed just now, to be able to casually talk to Hajime meant his nerve wasn't average.

"Is that so?"

"Ee, they are incomplete beings between people and demonic beasts. Nevertheless, they are frighteningly strong. In addition, they are infidels who don't believe in any gods. That's why, I can only nod that they are an odd existence for the church's authoritarian."

"I see. Rather, you're completely okay with it. Are you also one of those infidels?"

"I have a god I believe in, the one where the power is not held by "people". People are "customers" after all."

"… … Somehow, I can relate with what you just said. Must be a born merchant, you that is. Having seen it, I can only nod at your recklessness."

Having said that, towards Hajime that fiddled with the ring on his hand, Mottou showed a mixed expression of apology and pride, truly a complex expression. His merchant-like attitude from just now could no longer be seen. Hajime's bloodthirst was like having bathed in cold water for him.

"Although I have committed a blunder, if you have a demand, please come to my company. You're different from the usual adventurers after all. Because I want connections with such a peculiar person like you, I'll give you some discount."

"… … Really, what a firm business spirit."

While being looked at by Hajime with an amazed glance, after saying, "Well then, please excuse me", Mottou turned his heels and returned to the front.

Yue and Shia, even now, no, gathered even stronger gazes. If you chased Mottou's back, immediately there were merchant-like people who were talking while pointing at Yue and Shia. Although it was supposed to be a relaxing trip toward Fhuren, Hajime could only think that more troubles were waiting ahead.

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## Chapter 3 : Adventurers Guild, Fhuren Branch

Neutral Commercial City Fhuren

20 meters in height, the wall enclosed one of the continent's Neutral Commercial Cities with a length of 200 kilometers. All kinds of businesses and keen competitions happened in this

city every day, there were people who successfully realized their dreams, and there were also a lot of people who became penniless and left dejectedly. It could be said it was the number one city in the continent with the amount of people that came to sightsee, and those who came for business.

Because it was so huge, Fhuren was divided into four areas. The Central Ward where the facilities related to various procedures in the city gathered, Sightseeing Ward where amusement facilities were concentrated, Craftsman Ward where weapons and armor, also various furnitures were sold directly, and Commercial Ward where all kinds of stores and businesses lined up. There was a main street that stretched to the east, west, south, and north from the Central Ward, it seemed to be common sense to have numerous stores the closer ones to the middle part. The places that were far from the main street and central ward were places for black dealings, in other words, there were a lot of black market-like shops. In those areas, sometimes there were unexpected things appearing, and those who were accustomed to rough stuff like adventurers and mercenaries visit this place.

That story was something Hajime and his party heard while they were eating light meals in the cafe inside the adventurer's guild : Fhuren's branch. The one who told them was a woman whose job was a guide. Because this city was huge, there was a lot of demand for guides, so it became a special occupation with a social standing. Although there were a lot of guide stores, they all got high ratings because they improved their services to gain more customers every day.

Hajime and his party came to the adventurer's guild with the application form that had received the seal of proof after separating from Mottou's merchant company. Following that, because they didn't know the location of the inns and shops, they tried to get the guidebook from the adventurer's guild, that's how they came to know about the guide's existence.

Currently, after they paid the woman guide who introduced herself as Rishee, they were hearing the basic information of this city while having light meals.

"That's why, it is recommended to search for an inn in Sightseeing Ward. Although there are inns in Central Ward, it has become a tendency for the workers to nap there, that's why there are less services compared to Sightseeing ward."

"I see, then we will obediently look for an inn in Sightseeing Ward. Where's the recommendation?"

"It depends on what Mr. Customer demands. There are various kinds of inns, after all."

"That's true. Okay, I won't complain as long as the meals are delicious and they have a bath. There is no need to consider the location. Also, a place with a clear accountability should be good."

Rishee heard Hajime's requests with a smile. Toward the first two requests she nodded with "Un un", she seemed to have immediately listed all of the recommended inns inside of her mind. However, towards Hajime's next words, she could only let out "Nn?", while inclining her neck.

"Umm~, an accountable place?"

“Aa, for example, assume I was pulled into a fight where I was the obvious victim, so I don’t want to take responsibility of the damage inside the inn. I want to stay at a good inn, and I have a lot of equipment, so it’ll be a hassle to compensate that.”

“Uu~m, I think you won’t be involved that often, but…”

Hajime could only smile wryly toward the perplexed Rishee.

“Well, if it were ordinary people it’ll be like that, but we stand out, after all. It seems a lot of loose guys will be at Sightseeing Ward, and merchants with firm spirits that will force their ways will likely appear. Well, in the end it’s only “if possible”. If that’s too hard then there’s no need to consider it.”

Because of Hajime’s words, Rishee looked at Yue and Shia who sat at Hajime’s sides while focusing on eating their light meals. Then, she nodded in consent. Certainly, these two beautiful girls stood out. Even now, they gathered considerable gazes from the surroundings. Especially Shia who came from the Rabbitman tribe. Although it’s a crime to put a hand on other’s slaves, it couldn’t be said there would be no merchants that tried to persistently negotiate nor loose and reckless guys.

“Then, how about an inn with strict guards? There are lots of inns like that, and I can introduce you to a good one…”

“Aa, that’s okay. However, the guys that are blinded by desires will sometimes appear. So, it should be considered first that I am going to physically persuade them because guards are not absolute.”

“Ph-Physical persuasion… … I see, that’s why you asked for accountability.”

Rishee completely understood Hajime’s intent, so the words “if possible” Hajime said seemed to hurt her soul as a guide, then she accepted his requests and said, “Please leave it to me”, with a motivated expression. Following that, she turned her gaze toward Yue and Shia, then asked for their demands. It was a point where she tried to answer every customers’ needs as much as possible, surely this came from the guide store she belongs to.

“… … A big bath is good, however for a mixed bath, reservations are essential.”

“Umm, I want one with a huge bed.”

After thinking for a sec, Yue and Shia said each of their requests. Even though they were called requests, if Yue’s term was combined with Shia’s, she could see clearly their intentions. Having guessed that, Rishee said “I accept it, so please leave it to me”, with an acknowledging and clarifying face, but her cheeks slightly reddened. Immediately, she alternated her glances between Hajime, Yue, and Shia and that resulted in her cheeks blushing further.

By the way, the men who hung around in the nearby tables were staring at Hajime as if saying “If only a person can be killed by a stare!”, but because he was already accustomed to it, Hajime just let it go through his head as usual.

From there, they heard the stories of the other wards, then Hajime and his party felt an unexpected strong gaze. It was especially aimed at Shia and Yue, it was the rudest of all, a sticky gaze that stuck to them. Because it was too late for Yue and Shia to mind that gaze, they could only knit their eyebrows because of the unpleasant stare.

Hajime tried to take a peek toward the source of the gaze and… … there was a pig. With a fat body that easily surpassed 100 kilograms, an oily face, along with a pig snout and sticky blond-hair attached on its head. If it were only its appearance, it could be seen wearing good clothing even from a distance. That pigman was the one who stared at Yue and Shia with eyes completely mudded with desire.

While Hajime thought, "It'll be a hassle", the pigman moved his body heavily and while shaking he quickly approached Hajime and his party. Apparently, there was no time for them to escape. Hajime never thought of running away, though.

Maybe because Rishee also noticed his unrest, or maybe because that pigman stood out, when the pigman arrived with an arrogant attitude, she forgot to smile and "Geh!", raised an indescribable voice in bad taste.

The pigman soon arrived at the side of the table Hajime and his party were, then looked at Yue and Shia with a smile in his eyes, and when he saw Shia's collar he narrowed his eyes unpleasantly. Following that, he finally looked at Hajime, who he never looked at until now, and as if he finally noticed him, he showed a gesture and let out a one-sided demand with an arrogant attitude.

"O-Oi, brat. I-I'll give you a million ruta. H-Hand over that rabbit. That blonde too, I'll make her my concubine. C-Come with me."

Having said those words while slightly stuttering and coupled with kii kii sounds, the pigman tried to touch Yue. It seemed Yue was already his inside his mind. At that moment, a violent killing intent poured down. The faces of people in the surrounding tables turned pale as they fell from their chairs, and they began to desperately back away from Hajime.

Well, the pigman who received the killing intent directly was… … "Hii!?", let out a pathetic scream and fell on his butt, then he retreated while the place between his groins began to wet.

If Hajime let out his true killing intent, he might instantly lose consciousness, and because that'd be meaningless he put enough consideration into it.

"Yue, Shia, let's go. Let's change the location."

Because a dirty liquid leaked, Hajime stood from his seat then called Yue and Shia. Honestly, he actually wanted to immediately shoot him dead, but it'd raise a commotion if he killed him after all, and that'd make Hajime the assailant. The town's guards were not that naive to let go of a murder. Basically, as long as it's at the limit of a legitimate self-defense, Hajime thought of just half-killing him inside this city.

Rishee could only say, "Eh? Eh?", while blinking her eyes in confusion because Hajime and his party stood up from their seats. Rishee was fine even though she was inside the range of Hajime's killing intent because he had simply excluded her from "Pressure's" targets. It was

the reverse version of the pinpointed “Pressure” that he had used on Mottou to not let anyone notice him. It was the result of his training. It was natural for Rishee to be confused, that’s because when she thought the pigman was being selfish, he suddenly fell on his bottom and began to leak from in between his groins.

By the way, the “Pressure” that affected the surroundings was done on purpose. His reason was to make the surrounding guys who gave him depressing looks comprehend him. “Don’t try to touch them, okay?”, something like that. Judging from the surrounding guys’ pale expressions, it seemed there was no need to give out more warnings.

But, immediately after he dispersed the “Pressure” and tried to leave the guild, a big man came to block Hajime and his party’s route and stood like a Niou statue. He had a huge body with around 100 kilograms of weight in different ways than the pigman. His whole body was full of muscle with a longsword hanging on his waist, his appearance was like an experienced soldier’s.

Maybe because he saw that huge figure, the pigman once again let out a shout coupled with *kii kii* sounds.

“Th-That’s right, Leganid! Kill that shitty brat! H-He tried to kill me! Kill him slowly!”

“Young master, to kill him will be troublesome. Let’s just half-kill him.”

“Do it! I-I don’t care, just do it! B-But, don’t hurt the girls! Th-They’re mine!”

“Roger. So, please splurge on my reward.”

“I-I’ll give you any number you want! Just do it already!”

Apparently, the giant called Leganid was hired by the pigman as his bodyguard. He was talking to the pigman without looking away from Hajime, then he floated a satisfied smile when he heard about the promised reward. He thought nothing of Yue and Shia which was unusual. He didn’t look at them and only grinned at the word reward.

“Ou, boy. Sorry. I’ll half-kill you for the sake of my money. What, it’s not like I’ll kill you. Well, about those little misses… … just give up on them.”

Having said that, Leganid prepared his fists. He didn’t use the longsword because this was indeed a place where it shouldn’t be used. A commotion appeared in the surroundings when they heard Leganid’s name.

“O-Oi, by Leganid, you mean that “Black” Leganid?”

“”Black Wind” Leganid!? Just why did he become such a fellow’s bodyguard…”

“Isn’t it for money? He is “Money Lover” Leganid, you know?”

Hajime was able to guess the identity of the huge man in front of him from the surrounding whispers. Although his class was not known, he was a “Black”-ranked adventurer, the third rank from above, so he was quite the big-wheel.

Fighting spirit emitted from Leganid. Hajime thought it wouldn't be a problem to half-kill him because it was legitimate self-defense, and the moment he began to swing his fist, a voice came to restrain him from an unusual spot.

"… … Hajime, wait."
" ? What is it, Yue?"

Before she answered Hajime's question, Yue, while dragging the nearby Shia, came between Hajime and Leganid. While Hajime and Leganid were dumbfounded by it, Yue replied as she looked ahead.

"… … Let us take care of him"
"Eh? Yue-san, am I included?"

Yue ignored Shia's question. Having heard Yue's words, before Hajime could reply, Leganid bursted into laughter.

"Gah hahahaha, are you little misses my opponent? That's quite laughable. What? I'll forgive you if you become my opponent at nig- "… … Shut up, thrash" kh!?"

Before Leganid could finish his indecent words, Yue cut his words and quickly use wind blade to attack and cut his cheek. *Pusyu*, a small sound was made, his blood came and dripped as is. It seemed to be a fairly deep cut. Leganid fell silent just as Yue commanded. Because Yue's magic was too fast, he completely couldn't react to it. In his mind, "Just when did she chant? Where is the magic circle?", as he desperately tried to analyze her while letting out cold sweat.

Hajime who didn't know what Yue meant was currently looking at Shia who also didn't understand Yue's intention and the talk continued.

"… … We'll show them that we're not princesses that can only be protected."

"Aa, I see. We are showing them we can make a painful retaliation."

"… … That's right. Because we finally came here, I'll use that."

Having said that, Yue looked at Leganid with a more severe gaze and pointed at him.

"Well, I understand what you are trying to say. Certainly, if the princesses that they got are in truth fierce beasts, that should wake them up. Fortunately, there are a lot of witnesses… … Unn, isn't that good?"

"… … Fierce beasts is too cruel."

Hajime agreed with Yue's words and backed away with a wry smile. After Yue confirmed that Hajime had backed away, she sent an eye signal to Shia at her side. Having read the signal, Shia reached for Doryukken that was hung on her back, then as if not feeling the weight, she rotated it once in her hand.

“Oioi, just what can the miss from the Rabbitman tribe do? Because there is my employer’s request, will you just keep quiet?”

Without looking away from Yue, Leganid said that to Shia. However, Shia ignored Leganid’s words and advised him back.

“The longsword on your waist. Shouldn’t you draw it? Although I’m going to take it easy, won’t it be dangerous to be bare-handed?”

“Hah, big words from Usagi-chan. Young master! Sorry, but forgive me for one or two scratches!”

Leganid didn’t pay much attention to Shia and focused on Yue, while the pigman who was still nearby didn’t give out any objections. Surely, he must’ve judged it’d be difficult to subdue Yue without hurting her. However, Leganid should have noticed it. If he thought using common sense, he should feel the incompatibility of the cherished slave and the strength of the Rabbitman tribe that held the warhammer, he should’ve recognized the significance of them leaving him to her after he caught a glimpse of Hajime and Yue’s ability himself.

Without anymore talk, Shia held Doryukken near her waist… … and immediately dashed out. Then, she appeared in front of Leganid.

“Kh!?”
“Yaa”

While letting out an adorable voice, she changed into an overpowering manner and swung the super-heavy Sledgehammer, and it approached Leganid’s chest whose expression was dyed with astonishment. Immediately before getting a direct hit, Leganid was barely able to cross his arms to defend, but…

(Isn’t it too heavy!?)

He couldn’t do anything even though he had braced himself, so he jumped back to soften the impact, but her swing was too fast and made his action meaningless. As a result,

*GUSHA!*

Along with that sound, Leganid was blown away and his back crashed into the guild’s wall. Along with a roaring sound, Leganid vomited all the air in his lungs and inside his shaking point of view, he could see Shia’s appearance as she lost her interest. Apparently, she thought he would be able to resist some more.

For a “Black”-ranked adventurer like himself, to be easily beaten by a girl of the Rabbitman tribe and the fact that she even lost her interest, Leganid could do nothing but laugh at himself. He revealed a smile that looked like a frown because of pain and tried to use his hands to stand up, but because of a sharp pain he collapsed as is. When he looked at the source of the sharp pain, he could see his crushed arm.

Fortunately, the one that was crushed was only his right hand, so he managed to stand up using the other arm while enduring the pain. Although his vision was still swaying, he somehow managed to firmly step on the floor. Even if it was meaningless, if he hadn't immediately jumped back, he probably wouldn't be able to stand up.

However, it wasn't a good thing for him to stand up. Although Leganid managed to stand up partly because of his willpower, when he saw Yue's appearance which looked at him with cold ice-like eyes while her right hand was thrust out, he could only grumble inside his mind.

(Young master, I am sorry, it'll be too unprofitable…)

Immediately, for the first time in Leganid's life, he gained a valuable and worst experience of "dancing in the air".

"Having been embraced by the wind, dance and scatter like a flower and be smashed "Wind Flower""

It was Yue's original number two, a compound magic using Gravity magic and the bullet of "Wind Burst", a magic that shot a cannonball of wind. By freely manipulating several cannonballs of wind, the cannonballs would always surround and "continue to fall" to crucify their target using the gravitational field. Following that, it was an unsophisticated magic where the target became a sandbag in the air as is when they were launched at the same time. By the way, what happened was just like the chant described.

When the dance with an one-sided lead was over, Leganid, gusha, fell on the floor with an unpleasant sound and didn't even twitch. Actually, he already lost consciousness after several attacks, but although she knew that, Yue kept attacking him without mercy, she especially concentrated her aim at his crotch and that made the surrounding men cover their crotches. Toward the brutal and severe attacks, Hajime in the back could only say "Ow", with a shivering voice filled with pathos.

The two consecutive spectacles were over. They were followed by a silence that wrapped the guild's interior. Not even one person tried to move, they could only stare at Hajime and his party. If one looked carefully, the people who seemed to be guild staff had tried to stop the fight, but after they arrived at the cafe, they were stunned when they tried to stretch their hands towards Hajime and his party. It seemed that spectacle even shocked them who had seen various kinds of adventurers.

While everyone was stunned, slowly the silence was broken. Hajime *tsuka tsuka,* began to walk. All gazes inside the guild focused on Hajime. Hajime's destination was… … The pigman.

"Hii! S-Stay awaay! J-Just who do you think I am! I am Poom Ming! You're defying Baron Ming!"

"… … Apologize to all of that character's fans on Earth, you pig"

A character from Earth floated in Hajime's mind when he heard the pigman's name, that's why he deeply frowned and he grandly trampled the pigman's face that had fallen on his butt.

“Pugya!?”

He let out a pig-like scream as his face was sandwiched between the shoe sole and the floor, then *mishimishi*, his skull let out that sound that made him scream again out of fear. After that, because his voice was annoying, the more he screamed, the more the pressure increased. His face became uglier, his eyes and nose were hidden by his cheeks’s flesh. Before long, maybe because he noticed that the pain increased as he screamed, he began to keep quiet. Well, there was also the possibility that he merely lost the strength to scream.

“Oi, piggy. Don’t you come into my sight again. Regardless if you are involved directly or indirectly… … There won’t be a next time.”

Even though Poom was still being trampled by Hajime’s shoe sole, he tried to nod desperately while trembling. Finally, he had lost the power to bluff. His heart was completely broken. However, Hajime was not that naive to let him go if it was only to this extent. To not let it become “You forget the heat once it passes your throat,” temporary fear was not enough. Because killing him was not a choice, instead, he was going to carve a fear that would be remembered forever.

Because of that, he raised his foot a little, then Hajime transmuted the sole into spikes and mightily trampled again.

“Gyaaaaaaaa!!”

The spikes pierced Poom’s face and made numerous holes. In addition, one of his eyes were pierced and began to sprout a large amount of blood. Poom himself immediately fainted because of the pain. When Hajime moved his foot, what he saw was a tragic… … No, his original face was tragic in the first place so there wasn’t much change, for now, Poom’s blood-stained face was released.

Hajime, with a somehow refreshed expression, went toward Yue and Shia. Yue and Shia greeted Hajime with beautiful smiles. Following that, Hajime came to the side the guide; Rishee who was dumbfounded while smiling.

“Well then, Guide-san. Please take us to the place.”

“Hahih! W-Well, that’s, I, what can I say…”

Maybe because she felt the fear from Hajime’s smile, Rishee was flustered. Her expression was obviously saying she didn’t want to be involved with them. At least, that was because Hajime and his party were abnormals. Hajime, who had somehow guessed that, thought finding a new guide after such a commotion would be a hassle, so he wouldn’t let Rishee go. Having realized Hajime’s intent, Yue and Shia stood at Rishee’s sides. “Hiiin!”, was the miserable scream that Rishee let out.

And, her saviours came, although it was too late, the guild staff came.

“Umm, I am sorry, but please cooperate to be questioned over there.”

A male staff member informed Hajime, and three members of the staff were approaching to surround Hajime and his party. However, they seemed rather stiff. Several others were going to see the condition of Poom and Leganid.

“Even if you ask me, that piggy was trying to snatch my companions, then losing his temper he tried to attack us when I refused him so I only returned that back to him. That’s all, there’s nothing more to explain. That guide and the surrounding guys and merchants are the witnesses. Especially, those guys on the nearby tables that seemed to have attentively listened to us, right?”

While Hajime said that, he glared at the surrounding men, his eyes were saying, “You know what will happen to your neck if you lie to them, right?” and that made the men nod intensely many times.

“Although we know that, it is a problem that happened inside the guild, so we’ll judge it fairly by hearing the complaints from both concerned parties… … it is the rule that needs to be followed by adventurers…”

“Both concerned parties… … Huh”

Hajime took a glance towards Poom and Leganid. It seemed they wouldn’t wake up anytime soon. Although the staff members had called healers, they would only likely awaken after two, three days.

“Until they wake up, are you saying we’ll wait for that? Aren’t we the victims here? … … should I just carry him outside of this city and kill him?”

Hajime gave a blaming look toward the guild staff. Toward the typical claimer-like words, the male staff said, “Please don’t glare at us like that, it is our job so we can’t help it”, with an expression that gave off a desperate feeling. Following that, when they heard the last line that Hajime whispered, they tried to stop him in a panic.

Hajime, although reluctant, approached Poom and Leganid to wake them up with a sharp pain only to be stopped by the staff and they argued, then suddenly, a dignified voice came out.

“What is it? Just what on earth happened here?”

When you looked at the source, there was a slender, glasses wearing man who let out an intellectual atmosphere looking at Hajime and his party with strict eyes.

“Head of secretary Datt! You arrived at the right time! What happened was…”

The staff thought it was a fortunate event and called out toward the man called the head of secretary Datt. When Datt finished hearing the story from the staff, he turned a sharp gaze toward Hajime and his party.

Apparently, they still couldn’t be freed.

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## Chapter 4 : Branch Head's Request

The head of secretary; Datt, pushed his glasses up with his middle finger, and talked to Hajime with a composed tone.

"I've roughly heard the story. It looks like it isn't a lie that there are many witnesses. Although I think you're overdoing it… … well, let's just say it's within a permissible range because they didn't die. For now, before they wake up and give their side of the story, I assume you'll be staying in Fhuren. So, I want to verify your identities and your contact address… … you won't object if it's just that, right?"

What's implied was, 'I won't concede more than this, you know?', so Hajime replied to the head of secretary Datt while shrugging his shoulders.

"Aa, I don't care. If that pig still tries to complain, then it's me who wants to be called. I'll try a more polite method of persuasion at that time."

Hajime didn't refuse him, then he presented his status plate to the still amazed Datt.

"Our contact address, well we still haven't decided where to stay… … You can just ask that guide. We are going to stay at the inn she recommends after all."

Because Hajime turned his gaze towards her, Rishee twitched then dropped her shoulders with a resigned look because she'd still be their guide.

"Fumu, that's okay… … "Blue" huh. Even though the guy that lies there is "black"… … how about the status plates of the ones over there?"

Even a little, Datt was surprised when he saw Hajime's status plate displaying the lowest rank of an adventurer; blue. However, because he heard it was the two women that defeated Leganid, he thought the girls were the stronger ones and asked Yue and Shia to submit their status plates.

"Well, Yue and Shia… … these girls lost their status plates and we still didn't ask for a reissue. Look, isn't that expensive?"

Hajime casually said that lie. Although there'd be no problem to let them see the pair's abnormal strength, if possible he wanted to avoid the details being known.

"But, even if I can't clarify their identities, it'll be preserved in the record, so if you frequently cause trouble inside the guild, you'll be blacklisted regardless of who's the culprit and victim. If possible, can you pay the guild for a replacement?"

From Datt's tone, it seemed it was necessary to verify their identities by all means. But, if they got the status plates, then the two's peculiar magic would surely be displayed in the skill

column before they could conceal it. That, along with the magic from the Age of the Gods that'd surely be displayed. It would definitely cause a ruckus. Although it's possible for Hajime and his party to just mow down everyone who tries to harm them during the ruckus, they wouldn't be able to stay here any longer. Hajime thought about a lot of troubles that would somehow come. Having read his thoughts, Yue talked to Hajime.

"… … Hajime, letter."

" ? Aa. That letter huh…"

Because of Yue's words, Hajime remembered that he had received a letter from Catherine of the Brook branch when they were about to leave Brook town. She said to show it to the one who managed the guild when they got into trouble in the guild, because it could help them. A mysterious letter.

If the letter was useless, according to the circumstances, Hajime considered to immediately leaving the city. Then he fished out the letter from his chest pocket and handed it to Datt. Because he only heard half of what Catherine had said, he didn't know the contents. That's why Hajime immediately regretted not checking the contents first.

"Although I don't know if it'll act as a substitute for our identification, I was told to hand this over to the one who manages the guild by an acquaintanced member of the guild staff when we got into trouble."

" ? An acquaintance in guild staff? … … Let me see."

From the quality of Hajime and his party's clothes, they didn't seem to have any problems with money, that's why Datt felt doubtful about his attitude that refused to replace the status plate, but they passed him a letter instead. When he opened it, he earnestly read it and floated a fish-like expression.

Following that, he turned to look at the face of Hajime and his party and the letter many times while he repeatedly reading the letter's contents. From his figure that read the letter with wide opened eyes, he was trying to determine if the letter was genuine. Before long, Datt folded the letter again and carefully put it again inside the letter's envelope, then he turned his gaze towards Hajime and his party.

"If the letter is real it'll certainly serve as your identification… …I cannot decide by myself if the sender is real. I'll confirm it with the branch head, so will you wait in another room? It won't take much time. I'll be back in ten, no, fifteen minutes."

Because Datt's response exceeded his expectations, "Seriously, who on Earth is Catherine?", Hajime and his party were slightly taken aback

"Well, I don't mind if it's that much. I understand. We'll wait."

"Let the staff guide you. Well then, later."

Datt called the staff at the side and left a message to guide them to another room, then he immediately disappeared into the guild, taking the letter with him. The designated staff asked

Hajime and his party to relocate. Hajime and his party began to walk accordingly while being perplexed, but with a voice filled with anticipation rang out.

“Umm~, what should I do?”

It was Rishee’s. ‘If you still have to talk with the guild, can you excuse me?’, was what her eyes said. She obviously wanted to quickly separate from a seed of troubles, like Hajime and his party.

Hajime, with an expression as if it was natural, nodded and frankly replied.

“Wait for us… … don’t run away, kay? Aren’t you a pro?”

“… … Yes.”

Rishee dropped her shoulders and moved towards a seat inside the cafe. Her back said that although it was unpleasant work, she already accepted it, and the atmosphere of an upstanding member of society’s pathos drifted in the air.

After Hajime and his party were guided into the reception room, exactly after ten minutes, a knock came from the door. Hajime only answered with a word, then the door was opened. What appeared were a sharp eyed male in the latter half of his thirties, with blonde hair that was made into a swept back hairstyle, and Datt, from before.

“Nice to meet you, I am Ilwa Chang, the head of the Adventurer’s Guild — Fhuren branch. Hajime-kun, Yue-kun, and Shia-kun… … is it okay to call you that?”

After a simple introduction, the branch head; Ilwa confirmed the names of Hajime and his party and requested a handshake. Hajime returned the handshake while replying to him.

“Aa, we don’t mind. Our names, is it from the letter?”

“Just as you said. It was written in sensei’s letter. She seems to favor… … paid you a lot of attention. Your future is promising, but because you have a predisposition for trouble, if possible she wants us to take care of you, is the letter’s content.”

“Predisposition for trouble… … Huh. Trouble certainly continued to happen in Brook. Well, that’s okay. So, essentially will that serve as our identification? Or are there other questions?”

“Aa, Sensei already wrote everything here so there’s no need to question you further. She certainly has the eyes to discern people’s characters. She even purposely wrote this letter, so I’ll let this letter be your identification.”

Apparently, Catherine’s letter was really useful and let them meet the one who managed the guild. He seems to have close ties with Catherine, to have even called her “sensei”. Shia, who sat next to Hajime, had been especially helped by Catherine, so she was interested in the story and timidly talk to Ilwa.

“That’s~, who is Catherine-san actually?”

“Nn? Didn’t you hear from the person herself? She was the Guild Master’s head of secretary in the guild’s headquarters located in the Imperial Capital. Afterwards, she became the one in charge of training everyone related to guild management. Currently, of the 5 branch heads sent to each town, 60% are her pupils. I am also one of them, so I can’t go against her. Because of her beauty and pleasant character, at the time, she was a madonna-like existence to us, in certain ways she was also an adored big-sister-like existence. Afterwards, she married and transferred to the guild branch of Brook town. She said she wanted to raise her children in the country. Her marriage announcement was like a bolt from the blue. It became stormy after that. If you ask where, the guild in the Imperial Capital that is.”

“Haa~ she really is an amazing person~”

“… … Catherine’s amazing.”

“Although I had thought she wasn’t an ordinary person… … I never thought she was such a central figure. Rather, even though she was so popular… … Currently… … No, it’s better if I stop here.”

Hajime and his party came to admire her when they learned of Catherine’s true colors. It seemed they had always imagined her as an important person. Moreover, Hajime was somewhat looking at the distance, remembering the cruelty of time.

“Well, that’s that, if there are no more questions, is it okay for us to go?”

Originally, they came here only to verify their identity, so Hajime tried to confirm with Ilwa if it was over because staying any longer would be meaningless. However, Ilwa’s eyes shone and said, “Can you wait for a little longer?”, as he tried to stop Hajime and his party. It somehow gave them a bad premonition.

Ilwa urged Datt that stood next to him and an application form was presented in front of Hajime and his party.

“Actually, I’ve expectations for your help, I want you to accept one request.”

“I refuse.”

The moment Ilwa requested something of them, Hajime tried to decline as he stood up from his seat. Although Yue and Shia also followed after him, they stopped their feet when Ilwa spoke his next lines.

“Fumu, isn’t it fine to at least hear the story for now? If you listen, I think I’ll turn a blind eye to this affair…”

“… …”

What was implied was, “If you won’t hear me out, I’ll make you go through the troublesome procedures for this affair, you know?”, something like that. Using the testimonies from the surrounding people, even though Hajime and his party weren’t guilty of what was done to Poom and Leganid, what they have done was excessive self-defense. So according to the regular procedures, the guild would judge them fairly by hearing both concerned parties and

this procedure would take quite some time. As a result, even if Hajime and his party weren't in the wrong, on the other hand, they would spend time like fools until the necessary procedures were finished and the decision came. Also, if they escaped from these procedures, they'd likely be black-listed. In the future, that'd be troublesome because they wouldn't be able to use the town's guild facilities.

Hajime stared at Ilwa for a while, then he didn't say "I'll accept the request", but "I'll hear the story", because he thought it'd be okay to at least hear him out to avoid the trouble, then he sat on the seat.

"It looks like you'll listen to it. Thank you."

"… … as expected of a big city's guild branch head. You've a good character."

"Not as good as you though. Well then, the contents of the request is written here, to search for a missing person. A party of adventurers that accepted a request to investigate the northern mountain range area have not returned, so the family of one of the adventurers put up a missing person search request, something along those lines."

Ilwa's story if summarized, went something like this.

Recently, there were sightings of groups of demonic beasts in the northern mountain range area, which is why the guild made the investigation request. The northern mountain range area is a mountain that, once crossed, would lead you to an uncivilized area. Although not as strong as the demonic beasts inside the Great Dungeons, there are strong demonic beasts that only high-ranked adventurers could handle. It just that, besides the original members of the party that accepted the request, there was another member that tried to forcefully accompany them. By some happenstance, he eventually became a temporary member of the party.

This person was the third son of Count Kudeta; Will Kudeta. Count Kudeta always secretly made someone follow his son that had a tendency to rush out as an adventurer, just like a runaway. But because of this investigation request, the contact with his employer was lost, as it was unusual he was perplexed and put up a search request.

"Although the count had already tried to use his family's power to form a search party, too many problems kept popping up, which is why he put up the search request to the guild. Well, it was just put up yesterday. Because the missing party was considerably skilled, if they couldn't handle this, it'd just result in another disaster if accepted by regular Adventurers. That's why the big-guns should be the one to accept it. But unfortunately, such adventurers are all out on missions. Therefore, for you to come here with such timing, I want you to accept this request."

"From your statement, we don't have the required strength, so wouldn't that be useless? Unfortunately, I am a "Blue"-rank, you know?"

What Hajime implied was they wouldn't accept it because they didn't have the required strength.

"Didn't you instant-kill a "Black" called Leganid? Also… … for someone who easily searched around inside the Raisen Grand Canyon, do I need to say more ?"

” ! How did… … the letter? But, I didn’t say anything…”

No one had heard the story of Hajime and his party searching around the Raisen Grand Canyon. Therefore, unless it was from the letter, there was no way for Ilwa to know about that. But, he was doubtful about how Catherine learn of this. While Hajime puzzled it over in his head, Shia timidly raised her hand.

Hajime turned towards Shia with a suspicious look.

“What is it, Shia?”

“U~mm, I inadvertently told her when we talked… … Teehee?”

“… … I’ll punish you later.”

” !? Y-Yue-san said it too!”

“… … Shia, you traitor.”

“I’ll punish both of you later.”

Apparently, the culprits were Yue and Shia. Hajime declared to punish them, and the two were passively drenched in cold sweat. Looking at their appearances with a wry smile, Ilwa continued his talk.

“Although the probability of them being alive is low, it’s not zero. Because the Count is my friend, I want you to begin as soon as possible. What do you think? There’s no one but you here. Will you accept it?”

Ilwa’s attitude was as if he was begging him, the guild was simply responsible for the commission, but he included more emotion in this. For him to be a friend of the Count, it’s possible he’s acquainted with the missing Will. So he personally felt anxious for his safety.

“Even if you say that, we already have a destination for our journey. We are only here because it’s along the way. We won’t go to the northern mountain range area. So, allow me to refuse.”

Hajime, even though it’s a matter of the life and death for a noble’s third son, unhesitantly refused him. However, maybe he foresaw that, Ilwa immediately proposed a reward faster than Hajime could stand up from his seat.

“I can increase the reward, you know? Although the reward listed in the application is in the form of cash, let me add more appeal to you.. I’ll promote your guild rank. If it’s your abilities then becoming “Black” is okay.”

“Well, I don’t care about money and rank, that’s why…”

“Then, in the future, when you have some trouble related to the guild, I can be your support, how is that? To have the guild head of Fhuren branch’s support, you’ll have influence inside

the guild you can brag about, you know? You and trouble are pretty close after all. So, isn't it good as a reward?"

"That's a big treat for me. Aren't you putting in too much effort for a friend's son?"

Toward Hajime's words, Ilwa's expression crumbled. It became an expression full of regret.

"He… … Will accepted the request after I recommended it. I was also the one who passed the talk about the investigation request to the party. Even if you said there'd be an accident in the investigation, I thought there'd be no problem if he was with a party that had the required strength. I meant no harm. Will was not suited to be a noble, and he had yearned to be an adventurer for the longest time… … but, he didn't have the disposition. Therefore, if he were with strong adventurers, then he could go to dangerous places. I only wanted him to realize that it was impossible for him to be an adventurer. He was already attached to me at a young age…. … that's why, even though I wanted him to give up after this request…"

While he heard Ilwa's monologue, Hajime thought about it slightly. It seemed there was a thicker relationship between Ilwa and Will than Hajime thought. Although he had said that with a clarifying face, internally, Ilwa must be clinging to the last straw of hope. Will's odds of survival would become closer to zero as time passed. Having proposed such unreasonable rewards showed that Ilwa was in a hurry.

Hajime was also fed up with making excuses for Yue and Shia's identification every time they came near a town. That's why it'd be convenient to use this person's name in order to access a town's facilities from now on. Moreover, he had zero intention of catering to the Church of Saints or the Kingdom, and someday he might be labelled as a heretic. If that happens, it'd become extremely difficult for them to stay inside a town. That's why it was a nice thing to have a personal connection that could clear that hurdle.

So, Hajime thought that if he wanted the support of a big city guild's branch head, in this case, they must tell him their circumstances and forbid him to speak of it, so they could use him in times of inconvenience. Because he seemed extremely intimate with that Will person, if they brought him back alive, Ilwa couldn't be ungrateful to them.

"Although there's no need to think about it because you already said that much… … I have conditions."

"Conditions?"

"Aa, they are not something difficult. I want you to give status plates to Yue and Shia. After that, promise me you won't tell anyone about what's written there. Furthermore, even if it isn't related to the guild, I will use all of your connections, for our convenience. These two."

"That's too…"

"If you can't, then pretend we never talked about this. We are going."

Because of Hajime who tried to stand up from his seat, Ilwa and Datt displayed expressions filled with impatience and agony. Although the first condition was not a problem, his second condition essentially meant that he wanted the Fhuren guild branch's head to be the limbs of

a single adventurer. Because he had his own responsibilities, he couldn't immediately accept it.

"Can I ask why you demand that?"

"There's no need to be that negative. They aren't unreasonable demands, you know? It's just that our existences are peculiar, that's why when marked by the church… … No, from now on, I am sure we'll be marked, so at that time I only want to use you to make it easier for us. It's also good if you just become our allies in times of trouble. For example, not refusing us to use the facilities when we become wanted…"

"Is it certain you'll become wanted people? Fumu, personally, your secrets make me anxious. Although Catherine-sensei said you're not bad people… … now that you mention it, Shia-kun over there has marvelous physical strength, and although I didn't see it, from the report Yue-kun has conjured a never before seen magic spell… … your secrets must be along those lines… … following that, you said that you'll sooner or later be marked by the church… … you also didn't try to hide it, and it looks like you are already prepared for that… … it'll surely be hard to move into towns when that happens… … that's why to make it easier for you…"

As expected of a big city's guild branch head. He quickly thought inside his head. Ilwa thought about it for a while, then he matched his gaze to Hajime's having decided what to do.

"I absolutely can't support you when you ask for help for doing a crime because of ethics. So, I'll hear the details of your request first, only then I'll judge what to do. But, I promise I'll at least be your ally… … I can't concede more than this. What do you think?"

"Well, if it's like… … I'll accept it. Also, it's okay for the reward to be given after the request is finished. I'll bring back the young master dead or alive, is that okay?"

For Hajime, it was his first priority to obtain the status plates for Yue and Shia. It's unnatural for them to not have status plates because it's somehow always being requested to be shown, this was his first reason, and ultimately to make an excuse every time they came to a town was troublesome.

The only problem was that the person who prepared the status plates at the beginning would make a commotion, so he wanted to avoid it, but Ilwa's existence solved this problem. However, even if he made a verbal promise as the condition, there are still doubts. Sooner or later, the peculiarity of Hajime and his party might come to light, so it was not preferable because he might change sides immediately. That's why Hajime said to give the status plates as a reward after the request was completed. Whatever Will's shape was, Hajime would gain the answer from his afflicted heart, and he could calculate if Ilwa was good or not.

Ilwa was also able to guess Hajime's intentions. With a bitter smile, he felt relieved finding someone who could accept the search request.

"Truthfully, although your secrets make me anxious… … that's, I'll wait for you to finish the request. Just as Hajime-kun said, no matter what shape he is in, I want you to find traces of Will and the other… … Hajime-kun, Yue-kun, and Shia-kun… … Please take care of it."

Lastly, Ilwa looked at Hajime and his party with earnest eyes, then bowed his head. A big city guild branch's head bowing his head to adventurers. It wasn't something usual. It was because he was Catherine's pupil that his goodness as a person oozed out.

Having seen Ilwa's appearance, Hajime and his party stood up and without any eagerness, they lightly answered him.

"Kay."

"… … Nn."

"Yes."

Afterwards, they were given the downpayment, and a letter of introduction for the lakeside town at the foot of the mountain range area. They also received information about the investigation request that was given to the adventurers, and finally Hajime and his party left the room. *Batan*, the door was closed with a slam. Ilwa stared at the door for a while, then, "Fuu~", let out a big sigh. Inside the room, no one spoke a word, then Datt anxiously spoke to Ilwa.

"Branch head… … Is that okay? Such rewards are…"

"… … Will's life hangs in their hands. I can't ask anyone besides them. So, it can't be helped. Furthermore, they already agreed that I can judge first whether to lend them my power or not. There'll be no problem. Also, their secrets…"

"What's displayed in the status plates will be an "inconvenience", is it…"

"Fumu, Datt-kun. Did you know? Herrlich kingdom's Hero party, it seems all of them have unexpected statuses, you know?"

Datt opened his narrowed eyes wide because of Ilwa's sudden story.

" ! Branch head, the summoned ones… … you mean one of them is "God's Apostle"? But, from their tone it seems they are opposing the church, isn't the Hero's party managed by the Church of Saints?"

"Aa, it's just as you said. But… … around four months ago, it seems one of them died inside the Orcus dungeon. He fell into the Abyss along with a demonic beast."

"… … don't tell me, that person's still alive? If you said four months ago, isn't the Hero's party still full of novices? Although I don't know what it's like at the bottom of Orcus, to survive that…"

Datt couldn't believe it as he shook his head, and denied Ilwa's guess. However, Ilwa who somehow gave out an interested expression and once again glanced at the door from which Hajime and his party had left.

“That is true. But, if that’s so… … there must be a reason why he didn’t rejoin with his companions and even went on a journey, right? Just what did he see in the bottom of the darkness, just what did he obtain?”

“Just what… … that is huh…”

“Aa, no matter what it is, surely, it’s something worth making him decide to oppose the church. To put it frankly, he’s determined to even oppose the world.”

“The world…”

“For me, I want to make connections with such a peculiar man by all means. For example, even if they are chased by the church and the kingdom, right. Rather, Sensei might have guessed that, that’s why she purposely gave them this letter.”

“Branch head… … please be sure to know when to quit, okay?”

“Of course I will.”

Towards the story on such a large scale, Datt became dizzy, even so, as Ilwa’s head of secretary, he didn’t forget to advise him. However, Ilwa was deeply in thought when he heard Datt’s advice only replied in half absent-mindedness.

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## Chapter 5 : Reunion at Lakeside Town

In the middle of the vast plain was a highway stretching far to the North. Although it was called a highway, it was actually just ground without weeds since it had been treaded on so many times, thus it naturally became a road. Since there’s no such thing as a suspension in carriages of this world, the carriage crew would surely have sore butts by the time they reached their destination.

Suddenly, a shadow ran through the uneven road at an unbelievable speed. On its black body were two wheels advancing forward on the uneven road, carrying silhouettes of three people.

They are Hajime, Yue, and Shia. They moved on the highway at a speed incomparable to the time when they were at the bottom of the Raisen Grand Canyon. It might be more than 80km/h. Because there was nothing to obstruct his magic, the magic-driven two-wheeler’s original specs could be displayed. Their seating order was just as usual: Yue between Hajime’s arms, and Shia at his back. Shia’s rabbit ears were pata pata, fluttering in the wind.

Warm sunlight poured down because of the good weather, and with Yue using her magic to adjust the wind pressure, it could be said it was good weather for touring. In fact, Yue and

Shia were feeling the warm sunlight and comfortable wind with their entire bodies, closing their eyes because it felt pleasant.

“Hau~, it’s niice~, Yue-saa~n. We should exchange places when we retuurn~”

“… … That won’t do. This is my spot.”

“Eh~, don’t say that, let us change our places~, it’s nice in the back~”

Shia demanded to Yue that they exchange their seats with a slackened and stretched tone. With an unpleasant face, Hajime looked at Shia’s relaxed face over his shoulder and answered in Yue’s stead.

“You know, you can’t sit in front, right? Also, you’ll only obstruct me. Especially those rabbit ears. They’ll hit my eyes when the wind blows.”

“Ah~, that’s riight~”

“… … It’s not good, she’s almost asleep.”

Apparently, Shia was half-asleep because of how comfortable it was. She laid her head on Hajime’s shoulder with all of her weight. She was also half-asleep when she was talking to Yue before.

“Well, with this pace we only need one day. I’ll go non-stop, so let’s rest when it’s time to rest.”

Just as Hajime had said, Hajime and his party were going to a town only one day away; the town closest to the northern mountain range area where Will’s party undertook the investigation request. They had advanced as is without taking a break, so they would probably arrive at sunset and start searching after a night’s stay in town. The reason they were in a hurry was, of course, the fact that as more time passed, Will’s party’s odds of survival decreased. But because Hajime was being proactive for another person’s sake, Yue was glancing upward with doubt on her face.

Hajime let out a wry smile when he saw Yue adorably incline her neck in between his arms.

“… … Proactive?”

“Aa, it’s better if he’s alive. If it’s like that, he will truly be grateful. After all, problems from the Kingdom and Church are waiting ahead of us. So, isn’t it better to have more support? I don’t want to take care of them one by one, after all.”

“… … I see.”

In fact, he didn’t know what could possibly be done with Ilwa’s support. If anything, the possibility of him being a type of useless support was bigger. But, if it could be acquired with little work, then the work might not be regrettable.

“I have also heard that our destination, the lakeside town, has plenty of rivers. That’s why the town’s outskirts are the continent’s number one rice-producing area.”

“… … Rice farm?”

“Ou, in other words it’s the rice. Rice. It’s the staple food of my hometown, Japan. I haven’t eaten it even once since I came here. So, although I don’t know if it is the same thing or not, I want to hurry to eat it.”

“… … Nn, I also want to eat it… … The town’s name?”

Hajime looked far into the distance while remembering rice dishes. Looking at the Hajime with a content expression plastered across his face, Yue hadn’t yet actually heard of the town’s name and asked him. “Hah”, Hajime was startled, he even was a little embarrassed when he noticed Yue’s gaze. He then replied with a somewhat loud voice to hide his embarrassment.

“It’s the Lakeside Town called Ul.”

* * *

“Haa, there’s no clue today, too… Shimizu-kun, where on earth did you go…”

With her shoulders dropping dejectedly, the person who was walking through Ul’s main street was one of the summoned ones; the teacher, Hatayama Aiko. Her usual cheerfulness was gone. Currently, she was tortured with anxiety and worry, while a gloomy atmosphere hung around her. Somehow the main street’s color, and even the streetlights were dimmer than usual.

“Aiko, don’t be so disappointed. We still don’t know anything. It’s enough to just think he is safe. What can you do if you don’t even believe.”
“That’s right, Ai-chan-sensei. Shimizu-kun’s room didn’t seem to be attacked. So isn’t the probability of him going out on his own be higher? Please stop thinking of just bad things.”

Because Aiko was low-spirited, the commander of Aiko’s exclusive bodyguards; David, and her student; Yuka, called out to her. In her surroundings were the familiar Knights and students. They were also severely worried about Aiko and tried to talk to her.

One of the classmates, Shimizu Yukitoshi had disappeared for a little over two weeks. Aiko and the others had tried to search for him, leaving no stone unturned. However, his whereabouts were still unknown. There had been no sightings in this town, so they had sent messengers to the other towns and villages in the vicinity, but in the end their efforts were still in vain.

Although, at first they thought he was involved in an accident, Shimizu’s room was clean. Shimizu himself was a “Dark Magician,” a class that possessed high aptitude toward dark magic. He also had high aptitude in other magic systems, that was why he couldn’t be done in by the neighborhood thugs. A lot of them thought he left voluntarily.

Moreover, Shimizu was an obedient indoor type who had low sociability. Even among the classmates he didn't have an especially close friend. It was also surprising that he wanted to be Ai-chan's bodyguard. Because of that, other than Aiko, the students were sure of his safety. They were more concerned about Aiko, who became more low-spirited as the days passed. There was no need to say how worried her bodyguard Knights were.

Incidentally, they had reported it to the Kingdom and Church, and it seemed like a search party they had organized was coming. Shimizu was a summoned one with talent in magic, unlike the episode with Hajime in which the top management didn't even take an optimistic view. The search party would arrive in another two to three days.

Because words of concern came one after another, Aiko mentally hit herself. Whether he was involved in an incident or voluntarily disappeared, didn't matter, it didn't change the fact that it worried her. However, she must put it aside for now. Now her duty was to cheer up the other students at her side. That's why, "I am these children's teacher!". Aiko took a deep breath then slapped her cheeks with her hands to recover her spirit.

"Everyone, I am sorry for worrying you. It's just as you said. Nothing would be solved by brooding over it. Shimizu is an excellent magic-user. He'll surely be okay. Now, let us believe he is safe. Now, for today's dinner! Let's eat our fill and prepare for tomorrow!"

Although they knew she was overdoing it, the students obediently replied to her with a shout "Ye~s", as they cheered up. The Knights were also pleased with her appearance.

*KARANh KARANh*

When that sound rang out, the door of the inn Aiko and the others were staying at opened. It was the number one inn in Ul. Its name was "Water Fairy Inn". A long time ago, a pair of husband and wife fairies stayed in Uldeia Lake, and that was the origin of its name. Uldeia Lake was the lake boasted as the largest in the continent, and located on the outskirts of Ul town. Its size was about four times that of Lake Biwa in Japan.

The first floor of "Water Fairy Inn" was a restaurant. It served dishes that were also Ul's specialty products. The interior was calming, there were tables and bar counter that gave out a dignified atmosphere. Their ornaments were made with detail in mind, but did not stand out. Moreover, there was a modest chandelier on the ceiling, and flowers were arranged to add onto the calm atmosphere. It made one remembered the words "well-established", an inn where one could feel its history.

In the beginning, Aiko and her students weren't able to calm down because the inn was too high-class. It was impossible for Aiko and her student to stay at an ordinary inn because of their reputation, since people began to called them "God's Apostles" and "Goddess of Good Harvest". After some persuasion from the Knights, they agreed to stay at this place while they were in Ul.

In fact, they had spent time in one of the luxurious rooms of the Royal Palace, so Aiko and her students had gradually become accustomed to it. Now the inn had became a place where they could truly relax. For Aiko and the others who came back exhausted from farmland improvement and in search of Shimizu, this inn's dishes were their only daily enjoyment.

All of them were seated in VIP seats in the innermost section of the inn, as they enjoyed today's dinner.

"Aa, it's always delicious~ I never thought I'd be able to eat curry in this other world."

"Well, it looks like stew though… … No, is it white curry?"

"No, there is also the bowl of rice topped with tempura, remember? Even the sauce is superb, right? Won't Japan lose?"

"That, isn't it because Tamai-kun only eats the premade ones? It's not good to compare it with Hokaben's."

"Well, I'll choose the fried rice-like things. So, let's stop this."

The student's tension was raised every night because of the dishes closely resembled those from Earth. Although there were slight differences in appearance and taste, the concept itself closely resembled their counterparts on earth. The abundance of ingredient was one of the reasons that increased the quality of Ul town's dishes. Other than the rice, there were fishes from Uldeia Lake, in addition to herbs and spices from the mountain range area.

While Aiko and the others ate the delicious dishes happily, a splendidly mustachioed male of around 60 years of age, approached them with a smile.

"Everyone, what do you think of today's meal? If there is something you want to say, please tell us without any reserve."

"Ah, Owner-san."

The one who talked to Aiko and the others was the owner of the "Water Fairy Inn"; Foss Selo. He straightened his back, his eyes were gently narrowed, and gray hairs were mixed on his swept-back hair. He was a man who suited the calm atmosphere of the inn.

"No, today is also delicious. It heals us everyday."

When Aiko replied with smile, Foss gladly said, "Thanks for the compliment", and smiled. But, in the next moment, his expression was clouded as though he wanted to apologize. It was an expression unbecoming of Foss who always smiled gently. Wondering what had happened, everyone stopped eating and focused on Foss.

"Actually, although it's regrettable… I can only serve this much for the dishes that uses spices today."

"Eh!? You mean, we can't eat Nilshisseer (the version of curry in this other world.)?"

Sonobe Yuka, who favored the curry, was shocked and tried to ask again.

"Yes, I am sorry. Anyway, no matter how many ingredients were used… it would be enough if it were the usual… However, there's an unrest in the northern mountain range this month, so the number of people going to harvest the ingredients have sharply declined. Even a few

days ago, a party of Adventurers who came to investigate the situation had gone missing. Thus, even more people don't want to go there. It became a situation where this store doesn't know when the goods will arrive."

"Umm… What do you mean by unrest?"

"Something like the sightings of groups of demonic beasts… It's a comparatively safe place as long as you don't go into the mountains of the northern mountain range. Although there seems to be strong demonic beasts inside the mountain, they never come near on purpose. However, there were sightings of groups of demonic beasts in the mountain where there shouldn't have been any."

"That's truly worrisome…"

Aiko frowned. The others were somewhat depressed and mutually looked at each other. Foss said with an apologetic expression, "It isn't the right topic to talk while eating, huh?", then he continued to speak with a bright tone to recover the atmosphere.

"However, that disaster should be solved soon."

"What do you mean?"

"Actually, today there were new customers who just arrived before the sunset. It seems they are going to the northern mountain range in order to search for the Adventurers who had gone missing. They were appointed by the Branch Head of Fhuren guild, so it looks like they are some serious big-guns. They might be able to determine the cause of this disaster."

Although Aiko and her students were still seated, the bodyguard Knights commanded by David and currently eating with them let out "Hou", with a half admiration-filled and half-interested tone. Even among the guild's staff members, the Head of Fhuren branch was considered first class. For someone to be appointed to accept a request from that Branch Head meant that they were capable of clearing something only powerful people could accomplish. Their curiosity was aroused because they wanted to fight in the same battle as such people. Inside the Knights' heads, they were listed the famous "Gold" class Adventurers.

Aiko and her students were looking at the unusual chatter of David and the Knights, then they began to hear voices from the stair connected to second floor. They were the voices of a boy and two girls. It seemed like one of the girls was complaining to the boy. It was Foss who reacted to those voices.

"Oya, speak of the devils. It is them, Mr. Knights. If you want to talk to them, please do it now because they are going to leave tomorrow morning."

"I see, I understand. But, those are fairly young voices. Are there any "Gold" class that young?"

David and the Knights had already memorized the famous "Gold" class in their minds, but because there was no one with such young voices. Some of them looked at each other with perplexed expressions.

While they were in a state of confusion, the trio were approaching while talking.

The seats where Aiko and the others sat were the innermost seats enclosed by walls on three sides. It was a place where they could look anywhere inside the restaurant. For now, it was made into a private room with the use of the curtain. Needless to say, inside was the conspicuous Aiko's party, was Aiko; the one hailed as the "Goddess of Good Harvest", which made them even more conspicuous. It was why they often used the curtain whenever they ate their meals. Even today, they closed the curtain so they wouldn't be seen.

From the other side of the curtain, they could hear the conversation of a boy and two girls.

"Mou, how many times I must say it until you understand. Please stop leaving me alone and create a world with just the two of you in it. It makes me feel really, really lonely. Did you hear me? "Hajime"-san."

"I heard, I heard you. Just stay in another room if you don't want to see it."

"Nmah! Did you hear what he just said, Yue-san? "Hajime"-san just said something coldhearted."

"…"Hajime" …Bad!"

"Yes, yes."

Within their conversation, the name the girls said instantly rattled Aiko's heart. What did the girls just say? What was the boy called? This boy's voice… isn't it similar to "that boy"?, were the question that immediately floated into Aiko's mind. She stiffened as though something had tied her down, so she could only stare at the curtain.

The same thing happened to Sonobe Yuka and other students by her side. In their minds, thoughts of a certain boy who had disappeared into the abyss four months ago resurfaced. He was a boy who the classmates strongly believed to have "died in this other world". A boy they wanted to forget, a boy who stood out for better or for worse.

Because of the abnormal expression on Aiko's and her students' faces, Foss and the Knights tried calling out to them with dumbfounded gazes, but no one reacted. The Knights were wondering what on earth had happened as they looked at their faces. Then, Aiko blurted out a name.

"…Nagumo-kun?"

Because of the word she unconsciously let out, her body which had stiffened because of the unbelievable situation had regained its freedom. Aiko immediately stood up and her chair fell to the ground. She then pulled the curtain opened, so hard it might tear.

*SHAAAA!!*

Because of the unexpected loud sound that came from when the curtain was pulled, boy and two girls trio were only able to look with stupefied expressions.

Aiko shouted without confirming who the other person was. It was the name of her important student.

“Nagumo-kun!”

“Ah? …… Sensei?”

In front of her, with his eye wide open in surprise, was an eyepatched, white-haired boy. He looked completely different from the Nagumo Hajime in her memory. Not only his appearance, his atmosphere was also completely different. Nagumo Hajime Aiko knew was a boy who always daydreaming, gentle, and quiet. Actually, Aiko admitted that a wry smile fit him, but it was her secret. However, the boy in front of her eyes had sharp eyes, clad with an unapproachable atmosphere. He was too different from her memory. If she passed by him inside the town, she was sure she wouldn’t recognized the boy in front of her as Nagumo Hajime.

But if she looked carefully, his voice and face were the same as the one inside her memory. Above all… it was how the boy in front of her called her. That’s right, it was “sensei”. Aiko was convinced. Although his look and atmosphere had greatly changed, the boy in front of her was certainly her own student, “Nagumo Hajime”!

“Nagumo-kun… You’re Nagumo-kun, right? You’re alive… You really are alive…”

“No, you got wrong person. Bye.”

“He?”

To meet the student who was thought to be dead, was a miracle. Being deeply moved, her tear glands loosened, and Aiko eyes became teary. “Where was he until now? What on earth happened? I am truly glad that you were safe.” Were only some of the many things she wanted to say, but couldn’t. Even so, the reply to her desperate words was a completely unexpected answer.

She unconsciously let out a stupid voice, and Aiko’s tears were also withdrawn. She could only blankly stare at Hajime who had begun to suta suta, walk towards the exit. ‘HAH’, she returned to her senses, and panicky ran after him while gripping onto his wrist.

“Please wait a second? Aren’t you Nagumo-kun? Didn’t you just call sensei sensei? Just how is that the wrong person.”

“No, you heard it wrong. That was… Right, it was a dialect meaning “small”. Un.”

“Even so, that’s extremely rude! Rather, there is no way such dialect exists. Why are you trying to deceive me? That appearance too… Did something happen? What are you doing in this place? Why, why didn’t you immediately come back to everyone? Nagumo-kun! Please answer! Sensei won’t let you deceive her!”

Aiko’s angry voice resounded inside the restaurant. Several people and guests looked at the rumored “Goddess of Good Harvest” as she caught and shouted at a man. “Suwah, is he

Goddess's man!?", as they misunderstood, their eyes sparkled with curiosity. The students and the bodyguard Knights were also came out from the interior.

The students who had seen Hajime's appearance had shocked expressions as they couldn't believe what was in front of them. Half of it was because he was alive, while the other half was because of the drastic change to his appearance and atmosphere. However, they didn't know what should they do, so they could only blankly looked at Aiko and Hajime.

On the other side, although Hajime looked calm, his mind was attacked by petit panic. In the town he came to, after accepting the request from the guild's Branch Head he got acquaintanced by chance, he never thought there was a chance he would meet Aiko and his classmates again.

Because it was such a sudden event, he inadvertently muttered "sensei", he even thought, "That can't be~", as he tried to deceived himself. His lifecards after Aiko's angry barrage of questions were to "run away", "continue with the mistaken person act", "became a suspicious foreigner", and "let's just kidnap Ai-chan", were all the cards that came to his mind. He especially didn't know how the last one came up.

Then, Hajime was saved by his reliable partner. Of course it was not the regrettable rabbit ears character, but the Vampire Princess. Yue, came in between Hajime and Aiko, then she forcibly shook off Aiko's hand which was gripping Hajime's arm. On their side, the bodyguard Knights were letting out slight bloodthirst.

"… Let go, Hajime is troubled."

"Wh-What are you? Currently, sensei have an important talk with Nagumo-kun…"

"… Then, calm down a little."

Because the beatiful girl stared at her with cool eyes, Aiko slightly flinched. There wasn't much of a height difference between the two. Normally, it would be labeled as a fight between kids. However, Aiko was actually younger by age, and Yue wore a bewitching atmosphere despite her appearance. No matter who saw it, they looked like an adult (Yue) and an angry child (Aiko). Aiko was wary of Yue, so she quietly back away from Hajime with blushing cheeks because of her own words and the way she got mad at him. As she straightened her back to show her dignity as an adult, although it was too late, Aiko was… just like a child doing a stretch.

"I am sorry, I was distracted. Let's return from the beginning, you are Nagumo-kun, right?"

This time, Aiko said it quietly, but her voice was filled with conviction as she tried to ask Hajime, and matched her glance with him. Having seen such Aiko, Hajime was convinced no matter how he tried to deceive her, she wouldn't change her conviction and she would chase after him no matter where he go. Thus, scratched his head and replied with a profound sigh.

"Ah. Long time no see, sensei."

"As expected, you're Nagumo-kun after all… You're alive…"

Aiko's eyes became teary again, but Hajime didn't think anything about it as he shrugged his shoulders.

"Something like that. After a lot happened, I'm somehow still alive."

"I am glad. I truly am glad."

After he took a glance at Aiko who was unable to say more than those words, Hajime went to the nearest table and sat down. Having seen him, Yue and Shia also sat. Shia was somewhat perplexed. Aiko and the others were astonished by Hajime's sudden action. Hajime had regained his composure and he ignored the surroundings, only to beckon towards Foss who had watched how the situation progressed while he stood behind the students.

"Umm, Hajime-san. Is that okay? Aren't you acquaintances? Although it was just my guess… the other world's…"

"That thing doesn't matter at all. I was just surprised when they suddenly appeared, well, that's all. We are originally came for dinner, so let's order now. I have been truly expecting this. Don't you know? This curry… Ah, you didn't know it. The spicy dish was called Nilshisseer. I am happy just by imagining the taste…"

"… Then, I'll order that, too. I want to know what taste Hajime like."

"Ah, to casually appealed him… just a expected of Yue-san. Then, me too. Clerk-saa~n, we want to order~"

In the beginning, Shia was timidly sneaking glances at Aiko and the others, but changed her mind after Hajime said those words. Then Foss came by to take their order with a troubled smile.

However, naturally, there was no time for them to wait. Aiko, who was dumbfounded again by how Hajime seated himself at a nearby table and began to order, returned her to her senses and she approached Hajime's table. She said, "Sensei is angry!", with a truly angered expression as she pishi, hit the table.

"Nagumo-kun, our talk isn't over. Just how can you start to order as if it were the most natural thing in the world. In the first place, just who are these girls?"

What Aiko had said represented the feelings of everyone around them. The Knights who guessed Hajime was Aiko's student, who they heard had died four months ago, the students who waited behind Aiko, and everyone else were, "Un un.", nodding and they waited for Hajime's answer.

Hajime frowned because of it would be an annoyance. Because he thought he couldn't have a calm meal thanks to Aiko, who would keep waiting until he answers her questions even as they ate, he reluctantly turned his glance toward Aiko.

"I have come here in just a single day, without stopping, because of a request. That's why I am hungry, so just let me eat my meal. Also, these are…"

Hajime turned his glance towards Yue and Shia. And these two, before Hajime could say it, began an impactful introduction towards Aiko and the others.

"…Yue."

"I am Shia."

""" I am Hajime(-san)'s woman."""

"Wo-woman?"

Aiko somewhat stammered said, "Eh? Eh?", as she alternately looked between Hajime and the two beautiful girls. It seemed she couldn't processed the information. The students behind her were also perplexed. Well, the male students' expressions said, "That can't be!", as they restlessly looked between Yue and Shia. Gradually, their face reddened as they were charmed by their beauty.

"Oi, setting Yue aside. Shia, aren't you different?"

"That! Hajime-san so cruel. Even though you stole my first kiss!"

"No, just how long you want to drag that thing. That was lif—"Nagumo-kun?"…What is it, sensei?"

Because of the remark that he "stole Shia's first kiss", it seemed her thought process had finally caught up. Then, Aiko's voice dropped an octave. Inside Aiko's head, it seemed she imagined the scene where Hajime was laughing loudly while being attended by the two beauties in each arm. Her expression said everything.

Blushing, Aiko interrupted Hajime's words. Her face was filled with determination to return her misconducting student into the right path. Following that, a large thunder called "Sensei's anger" fell into Ul town's number one and first class inn.

"To steal a woman's first kiss, and even t-two-timing! So, you didn't immediately return because you wanted to play around! If so… that's unforgivable! Ee, sense will absolutely not forgive it! It's time for scolding! Just wait there, Nagumo-kun!"

Hajime looked at Aiko with a skeptical gaze, who yelled *"kyan kyan,"* as he let out a deep, deep sigh thinking it was going to be troublesome.

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## Chapter 6 : Aiko's Worries

Because of Aiko's roar, Hajime and his party were guided to a VIP seat, away from the eyes of the other guests. Then, Aiko, Sonobe Yuka, and other students bombarded him with questions. However, Hajime was focused on the Nilshisseer (other world's version of curry) in front of his eyes. He answered them in a daze.

Q : You fell from that bridge, what happened afterwards?
A : I did my best.

Q : Why did your hair turn white?
A : The result of me doing my best.

Q : What happened to your eye?
A : The result of me doing my ultra best.

Q : Why didn't you immediately return?
A : No reason to do so.

After hearing that much, Aiko yelled angrily with her cheeks puffed, "Please answer us seriously!" Indeed, her being unable to show any intensity in that action was a sad thing. As usual, Hajime looked like a willow when the wind blew. Without matching her gaze, he deliciously enjoyed the Nilshiseer, while sometimes listening to Yue and Shia's quarrel. His face was full of satisfaction.

Angered by his appearance, was the commander of Aiko's bodyguards, David. He couldn't endure the woman he fell for being ignored. That's why he threw his fist onto the table and a loud sound rang out.

"Oi, you! You're being asked by Aiko! Answer her seriously!"

Hajime took a glance at David, then "Haa", let out a sigh.

"Aren't we eating now? Behave yourself."

His protest was completely ignored. However, David has great pride because, as a Temple Knight, he was entrusted as the commander of an important person's bodyguard, so he couldn't endure it and his face turned red. Following that, because Hajime wouldn't give him a clear answer, he changed his target as he turned to look at Shia.

"Hmm, did you say behave? That word, I return it back at you. To have a dirty animal share the same table as humans, you are the one who has no manners. Won't you at least chop off those ugly ears? She will look more human like that."

Shia's body trembled as she was stared at with eyes full of disdain. In Brook town, from her impression of the inn, having been close to Catherine, added to Hajime's existence, it was full of amiable people. Although there were lots of discriminating eyes in Fhuren, and even though they recognized her as a slave, no one made fun of her by directly saying that.

In other words, since the beginning of her journey with Hajime, this was the first time she had directly received discriminating words as a demi-human. Although she wanted to think

nothing of it, she was slightly surprised by the attack, even after she had got accustomed to the outside world, she could still feel the damage. *Shun,* Shia looked down depressedly.

If she looked carefully, she could see that it wasn't limited to just David. Chase and the other Knights also looked at Shia with the same eyes. No matter how intimate they were with Aiko and her students, they were Temple and Imperial Knights. They were men from the Church of Saints and the Kingdom, so their discrimination towards the demi-human race was strong. After all, the source of discrimination were the Church of Saints and the Kingdom. Even though David and the Knights were influenced by Aiko and could think for themselves, they wouldn't have changed after only a few months because this sense of value was not so shallow-rooted.

Because it was something unreasonable, Aiko instinctively tried to protest. But before that, Yue who grasped the downcast Shia's hand, directed a glare as cold as absolute zero at David. A cold gaze that seemed to be able to freeze one's body came from the highest class, bisque doll-like beautiful girl. David flinched for a moment, but became enraged when he saw that the pressure was coming from a girl with the appearance of a child. Usually, he wouldn't easily lose his temper, but the words he'd just spoke, and looking at his dear Aiko, he had lost it.

"What, what's with those eyes? That's rude! Even though you aren't a God's apostle, you are trying to oppose a Temple Knight!"

David spontaneously stood up. Although the vice-commander Chase tried to stop him, faster than that, Yue's words clearly rang out in that uproar.

"…A small man."

Those were words of ridicule. Words that ridiculed how small his vessel was, to shout just because of a difference in race, and lose his temper when glared at by a girl. David was already lost in anger. As a man, being called small in front of Aiko drove him over the edge.

"… You pagan. I'll send you to hell along with that animal."

As he quietly muttered that without any expression, David reached for the sword by his side. Because the carnage appeared all too sudden, the students were flustered, while Aiko, Chase, and the Knights were all trying to stop him. However, as though he didn't hear the surrounding voices, David finally slightly pulled the sword from its sheath.

At the same time,

*DOPANh!!*

A dry, explosive sound echoed inside "Water Fairy Inn". At the same time, David, who was about to pounce at any time, was hit in the head and got blown away. As it were, the back of David's head hit the wall behind him, hard, and a terrific sound resounded. His eyes turned white as he collapsed. The sword was released from David's hand and *gashan*!, it fell to the floor.

No one was able to comprehend what had happened just now, and were all stunned. Their gazes turned to David who collapsed with the whites of his eyes showing. Then someone was curious as to what had happened to emit such a large and explosive sound, it was Foss, who pulled the curtain. Following that, he became wide-eyed as he was stunned by the disastrous scene in front of him.

On the other side, Aiko and the others were finally able to regain their senses when Foss entered. Their gazes which were then directed toward David, were naturally drawn to the source of the explosive sound.

In that place was something Aiko and her students had knowledge of, but had never actually seen. It was something from the other world, something completely unknown to the Knights. There was the figure of Hajime holding a "gun" while seated. White smoke came out of Donner. At least the bullet he shot was a non-lethal rubber bullet.

Although they didn't know the details, the Knights had guessed it was Hajime's attack, so they simultaneously put their hands on their swords while letting out killing intent. However, what immediately followed, was by a violent killing intent incomparable to the Knights'. It was as though they were attacked by a hammer that fell from heaven, as the Knights who began to stand were forced to sit back down into their seats.

Although they weren't submerged in the killing intent, having felt the pressure Hajime emitted, Aiko and the others turned pale as they trembled.

Hajime put Donner on the table and *gotoh*, it made an unnatural noise. Its purpose was to threaten them. Following that, he clearly declared his standing and asked where Aiko and the others would choose to stand.

"I have no interest in you lot. I have never thought of wanting a relationship with you guys. Moreover, I won't say anything about what had happened to me or what I want to do. I am only here for work, so I'll resume my journey once it's over. That's where we say good bye. Also, let's not intervene with each other. No matter what kind of selfish things you want to do, just don't obstruct me. Just like now, if you become hostile… I'll likely kill you."

Understand? Was what Hajime's eyes asked, but no one said anything. Immediately, he turned his gaze towards Chase and the Knights, who desperately endured the Pressure, and all they could do was slightly nod.

Next, Hajime turned his gaze towards Aiko and her students. Aiko didn't say anything. No, more like she couldn't. It was not only because of the pressuring feelings that gushed out, but also because of Hajime's words, and how her student change without her knowing. Those were not something Aiko's pride could allow.

Hajime sighed as he shrugged his shoulders and canceled the "Pressure." Although there was no answer from Aiko, Hajime could somehow sympathize with her feelings, so he didn't force her for an answer. The other students were obviously frightened, so he guessed they wouldn't dare challenge him.

With the tremendous feeling of oppression vanished, the Knights collapsed and let out deep sighs. Aiko and her students were also exhausted and sat deeply on the chairs. As though nothing had happened, Hajime resumed his meal, and talked to the depressed Shia.

“Oi, Shia. That’s something normal “outside.” There is no need to take it seriously, okay?”

“Yes, that’s right… Although I understand that,… as expected, for humans, these ears are disgusting.”

With self-derision, Shia patted her ears with her hands and let out a bitter smile. To such a Shia, Yue whispered words to comfort her with honest eyes.

“…Shia’s ears are lovely.”

“Yue-san… Is that so?”

Even so, Shia was still unconvinced about it, so this time Hajime followed up with a somewhat amazed expression. Because Yue often said “Bad!” to him, Hajime’s attitude towards Shia had softened little by little, and he tried to comfort her with the utmost of his ability.

“You know, their education was practically brainwashing from the Church and nobles of the Kingdom, so it’s just their feelings of aversion. Don’t you know that the Rabbitman tribe are the number one most popular pet slaves? In other words, no one thinks of you as disgusting in general.”

“Th—… that’s so… …U-umm, by the way Hajime-san,… Umm… what do you think… about my ears?”

Having guessed that those words were Hajime’s own way of comforting her, Shia felt slightly happy. Then she asked him with an upward gaze with blushing cheeks. As if saying, “I want to know, but at the same time don’t want to,” her rabbit ears completely drooped, and sometimes they twitched towards Hajime.

“… I don’t think anything about them…”

Stealing a glance at the rabbit ears, Hajime returned his gaze towards his meal as he tried to deceive her, and replied snappishly. The rabbit ears drooped even more as though they regretted asking. However, with the next line from Yue, they immediately regained their energy as they stood up; *hyupa!*.

“… They are Hajime’s favorite. He cuddles them when Shia’s sleeping.”

“Yue!? Didn’t you promise not to tell her that!?”

“Ha-Hajime-san… you like my rabbit ears… Ehehe.”

With her cheeks dyed red, Shia tried to suppress her grin with both hands, and as if saying “Wa~i!”, her rabbit ears above were moving, expressing her delight.

The awkward and strained atmosphere of massacre that floated in the air until now had dissipated as if it were an illusion. The atmosphere had mysteriously turned pink-colored, so Aiko and her students, even the Knights were blinking in amazement. For a while, they watched Hajime's love-comedy interaction, then one of the male students; Aikawa Noboru muttered.

"Huh? How strange. Although until just now Nagumo was truly scary, now it isn't killing intent that's gushing out…"

"You too, huh. Rather, those two, although they are dangerously cute,… although they're totally in my strike-zone,… but, to flirt in front of my eyes is torture for me…"

"… It's just as Nagumo said, those things don't matter at all. But, having the skill to get along with girls from another world… I want to ask him how!… Noboru! Akira!"

""Heh, we are going to hell together, Atsushi!""

With their eyes boiling with envy, they stared at the Hajime who made them shudder until just now; it was the unison of three males from Ai-chan's bodyguards. The serious atmosphere was completely blown away. The female students began to regain their original demeanor, and they looked at the male students with terribly cold eyes.

Chase, having realized the atmosphere had calmed down, started to heal David. At the same time, with his caution and hostility were subdued, he asked Hajime with a smile. Apart from Hajime's circumstances, there was something he had to hear by all means.

"Is it okay to call you Nagumo-kun? About before, my commander had been rude. No matter what, we are Aiko-san's bodyguards after all, so we become oversensitive if it concerns Aiko-san. Somehow, I would like for you to forgive us."

Although Hajime wanted to interrupt him and say, "How can oversensitivity turn into murder?", but the word 'murder' itself made him unable to say anything. That's why he just silently waved his hand to tell him to stop that. Because of this perfunctory attitude, Chase's eyebrows slightly twitched, but his poker face-like smile didn't crumble. Following that, with quick thinking, because he couldn't just leave it at that, he cut to the case about Hajime's artifact-like thing in front of him.

"I assume… that's an artifact. Although I can't be sure with my limited knowledge, I can see that it's quite a powerful one. It's much faster than a bow, it also didn't need chanting or a magic circle. Just where on Earth did you get it?"

Although he was smiling, Chase's eyes weren't. Judging from his words, since there wasn't the presence of magic being used, he thought it had a bow-like pure physical mechanism and could be mass-produced. If so, it'd be a great help for the sake of dominating against enemies before war breaks out. However the Knights weren't a match for Hajime, so he at least wanted to get information out of him.

Hajime stole a glance at Chase. Following that, before he could say anything, he was interrupted by an excited voice. It was a male classmate; Tamai Atsushi.

“Th-That’s right, Nagumo. Isn’t that a gun!? Just, how did you get ahold of that!?”

Chase reacted to Tamai’s shout.

“Gun? Tamai, do you know anything about that?”

“Eh? Ah, that’s right, I know of it. It’s a weapon from our world.”

Chase’s eyes shone because of Tamai’s words. But afterwards, he stared at Hajime.

“Hou, in other words, it isn’t an artifact from this world… If that’s so, it must be made by someone from a different world… and of course the maker is…”

“It is me.”

Hajime easily answered that he made it. Chase, because he held the impression of Hajime as a secretive person, was surprised by how easily he admitted it.

“You admit it so easily. Nagumo-kun, do you know what it means to hold that weapon? That…”

“It could completely change the situation of the war in this world,… right? That’s if you can mass-produce it. Mostly, you want me to return with you and teach you how to make it, or something like that? Naturally, I reject it all. Just give up.”

Hajime’s words had left him completely helpless. Those words seemed to be prepared beforehand. But, Chase didn’t give up. That’s how attractive the gun was.

“But, the Soldiers with low levels can have high offense if it could be mass produced. When that happens, we can make use of a lot of people in the upcoming war, and our chances of victory will also greatly increase. If you cooperate, doesn’t it mean you also help your teacher and friends? If so…”

“No matter what you want to say, I won’t cooperate. If you try to take it, then it means you’re my enemy. At that time… be prepared to be annihilated even before the war breaks out.”

Hajime’s quiet words sent a chill toward Chase’s whole body and he shut his mouth. Then, Aiko managed to intervene there.

“Chase-san. Nagumo-kun has his own intentions. Please don’t force my student. Nagumo-kun too, please stop saying such extreme things. Be more peaceful… Nagumo-kun, are you seriously not coming back?”

“Ah, I don’t want to return with you. Tomorrow morning, after I complete the request, I’ll leave as is.”

“Why…”

Aiko looked at Hajime with a pained expression, she wanted to know his reason, but Hajime rose from his seat before she could ask. Unbeknownst to them, Yue and Shia had also

finished their meals. Although Aiko tried to stop him, Hajime ignored her and climbed the stairs to the second floor, accompanied by Yue and Shia.

At the time Aiko and the others were left behind, a subtle and indescribable atmosphere was in the air. They were glad the classmate they thought was dead was actually alive. But, for the person himself, they seemed to have not even registered in his eyes. Moreover, he had become strong to the point, that it was impossible to compare him to his past self. He was not the same as the one who was once called “incompetent” in contempt as they looked at him from above.

Moreover, about the contempt, they had pretended not to notice Hiyama and his friends bullying him. Followed by that “friendly fire” incident, they could only feel more indebted because of Hajime’s ambiguous attitude. As a result, no one could proactively reach out to Hajime.

Aiko herself was greatly shaken by her student’s change and angered by the current development in her mind, so she was unable to stop Hajime.

Chase, while he looked at the currently recovering David at the side, seemed to think of something.

With their meals completely cooled, their appetites also disappeared. Without looking at the food in front of them, all of them began to deeply think about how “Hajime survived” after he left them.

Just what on Earth could completely change a person like that, what did Hajime think at that time when the “friendly-fire” incident happened, what the current Hajime thought of them… Most likely, he held a grudge against them. With those thoughts making revolutions in their minds, all of them became depressed, and the day was over.

* * *

In the middle of the night. Surrounded by the night, they were completely exhausted. Both physically and mentally, thanks to the unexpected development. All of them fell asleep, but Aiko wasn’t able to sleep even now. Aiko’s room was a single room, so it was not a large one. A table set and bed with carved wooden feet, a small fireplace, and a leather sofa in front of it. In the winter, the flame would surely brightened the room, and the inn guests would be warmed just by seeing it.

Aiko was thinking about what happened earlier today, she watched the unlit fireplace while deeply entrusting her body to the sofa. The insides of Aiko’s head was like an unarranged bookshelf, with all of that information in disorder.

Even if she couldn’t think about it, she wanted to think. And from then on, her head that ran round and around in circles didn’t give out any constructive opinions at all. She recalled smiling when she found out her student was alive, then she could only knit her eyebrows because of his unamicable attitude.

She had seen a glimpse of Hajime’s power through David’s speech and conduct, she thought he wouldn’t have been able to survive if he didn’t change, and how much hardship Hajime

must have experienced. At that point she could only let out a sigh because she couldn't help him at all. However, she recalled his interactions with the two girls, she thought he must have found companions he could trust, and she smiled again.

And, suddenly, a voice rang out inside the room where there should be no one but her inside.

"Why do you keep changing your expression, sensei?"

"Kh!?"

Aiko turned around to the source of the voice while wide-eyed. There was Hajime who stood at the entrance door with his arms folded. Aiko was so surprised that she became tongue-tied, but somehow managed to speak.

"Na-Nagumo-kun? Wh-Why are you here, how…"

"Even if you ask how, I just came through the door, no more no less."

"Eh, but the lock…"

"My class is transmutation master, you know? Unlike the locks on earth, I can open this kind of lock mechanism."

Hajime lightly answered, which stunned Aiko for a while. Her heart loudly throbbed in surprise and that somehow managed to calm her down. She frowned, then criticized him.

"At such a time, moreover it's rude to suddenly barge into a woman's room without even a knock. To purposely open the lock… just what do you want?"

For a moment, the word yobai came into Aiko's mind but she immediately erased the thought. She slightly shook her head as she recalled the fact that the other person was her student. Hajime only warded off Aiko's scolding like a willow blown by the wind, and he told her the reason for this thoughtless visit.

"Well, I am sorry about that. I just didn't want anyone to know about this visit. I wanted to talk to sensei, but before, there were the fellows from the Church and the Kingdom, so I couldn't do it. After all, the contents of this talk might have angered those guys."

"A talk? Nagumo-kun, it was okay to talk to sensei and the others…"

By chance, she thought he wanted to return with them, and Aiko's eyes shined in expectation. If it was a consultation from her student, then it was as though the room was a teacher's office. But her expectations were immediately denied by Hajime.

"No, I don't want to return, you know? So stop looking at me with those eyes filled with expectation… What I want to talk about now is something I thought sensei would be the most calm to listen to it. After this talk, I'll leave what you want to do to your own."

Having said that, Hajime began to talk about the story of "Liberators" and the Mad Gods he heard from Oscar.

Hajime obviously had his own reasons for telling Aiko this story. According to the Gods' intentions, the heroes; Kouki and the others, were made to dance in their game, and the Gods never intended to return them to their own world. To save the human race from the demon race, in other words to win the upcoming war, is the result of the Gods pulling the strings behind the stage in the first place. The heroes themselves were only interesting pieces they had gathered without any real reason. Rather, they only thought it was more appropriate to start a new game using the heroes.

However, for Hajime, there was no reason to pointedly explain this to Kouki and the other students. He wasn't interested with what his classmates wanted to do, and it would also only be a hassle for him. Even if he told him, that man who believed that justice always laid with the majority wouldn't believe him.

Because he was alone, between the words of a boy who had changed drastically and words that requested to save the majority, he didn't even need to think about who they would trust. Rather, because many people believe and worship "Ehito-sama," he'd only be mocked and criticized. Because of that, Hajime didn't want to become related to Kouki in the least.

However, by coincidence upon coincidence, it resulted in him meeting Aiko. Hajime himself knew Aiko's main principles always centered around her students. In other words, regardless of the circumstances of this other world, she would calmly make a decision for the sake of her students. Following that, judging from the attitudes of his classmates today, and how they yearned for Japan, if it was Aiko, surely her words would be able to influence them. Those were Hajime's thoughts.

Although, he didn't know how her influence would change their actions. With this information, if the movement of Kouki and the others became different from what the Gods intended, they'd surely put much more attention towards Kouki and the others. Hajime already knew that his existence would stand out like a sore thumb when he journeyed to conquer the Great Dungeons, and there was the possibility of receiving interference from the Gods. That's why, by indirectly passing the information using someone they trust, he could rearrange the actions of Kouki and the others. Thus, he could delay being noticed by the Gods. His only objective was to draw attention away from himself.

In addition, without relying on the Gods, Hajime's aim was to search for different ways for them to return. Furthermore, just like the "Liberators," he wanted to show Kouki and the others how their original allies became manipulated enemies, it's his intention to plant the wedge of distrust towards those Gods.

In the first place, he was only able to think of this idea because of the coincidental meeting with Aiko, so Hajime never expected anything out of it. For Hajime, there was no grudge nor hatred towards his classmates. He was just indifferent towards them. If they could be used, then he'd used them, and he'd leave them alone if they didn't seem useful. That's why he didn't disclose this information only by chance.

Having heard the truth of this world from Hajime, Aiko was dumbfounded. It was not known if she truly understood it. Processing this information, no matter what kind of ideas she got, it still took her more time.

“Well, that’s all. That’s what I came to know from the depths of the Abyss. I’ll leave what to do after knowing this to sensei. It’s okay to think of it as just nonsense, and it’s also okay to move into action if you think it’s the truth. Just do as you want to.”

“Na-Nagumo-kun, don’t tell me, to deal with those “Mad Gods”… you began your journey?”

“Hah, that can’t be. I feel from the bottom of my heart that it doesn’t matter what happens to this world. I am only searching for a method to return. That’s why I went on a journey. The reason I’m telling you this is because it seems like it’d be convenient to do so, that’s all.”

Aiko wore an indescribably subtle expression because he snorted at her question. Although she was relieved he didn’t rashly poke his head into danger, she couldn’t help but frown as a teacher because of how easily he said he could cast the others away. But, she herself also made her students her first priority in this world, so she couldn’t say anything back. As a result, she tried to change the topic with a subtle expression.

“Do you believe in that?”

“That’s so. The Great Dungeons are the keys. It’s okay if you search for it if they interest you. Once you exceed the 100th level of Orcus, you’ll happily find the real Great Dungeon. First of all, by looking at your appearances today, you’ll immediately die when you go there. It’s out of the question if you can’t ignore “Pressure” of that level.”

Aiko was reminded of the pressure that gushed out from Hajime at dinner time. Following that, she opened her eyes filled with complex feelings of sympathy, admiration, and other various feelings when she thought again about the harsh conditions he must have lived through.

For a while, their silence continued. The room was filled with silence. Hajime was certain the information was received after looking at Aiko’s appearance. And because he had no more business, he immediately turned his heels and walked towards the door. Behind him, Aiko told him about a certain student she remembered when they talked about the Orcus dungeon.

“Shirasaki-san still hasn’t given up on you.”
“…”

Hajime stopped walking because of the unexpected words from Aiko. Then, Aiko spoke softly with Hajime’s back in front of her.

“Although everyone believed you were dead, she is the only one who didn’t give up on you. Before she confirms it with her own eyes, she believes you are still alive. Even now, she’s still fighting in the Orcus Great Dungeon. Even though Amanokawa-kun and the others are only going to the dungeon for training, her only purpose is to search for you.”

“… Is Shirasaki okay?”

After a long silence, Hajime asked Aiko. Hajime who took an indifferent attitude towards them, began to ask about another with words of concern. Aiko, who discovered that the original Hajime still existed, displayed a joyful expression.

“Y-Yes. Although the Orcus Great Dungeon is a dangerous place, her ability has developed well, and she continues to conquer the dungeon. Sometimes letters come from her. Are you curious about her? Nagumo-kun and Shirasaki-san got along after all.”

Aiko talked with a bright smile, but Hajime only expressionlessly looked back over his shoulder without denying or affirming anything.

“Although I didn’t mean it like that… it’s good if you tell her this when you exchange letters. What she should be cautious of is not the demonic beasts in the dungeon. It’s her companions.”

“Eh? What do you…”

“Sensei, I can already guess the situation from the attitude of Tamai and the others today. The cause of me falling in battle against the Behemoth, you think it was just an accident « … », right?”

“Th-That’s… Yes. Some magic went out of control and resulted in accidental friendly-fire… Nagumo-kun still holds a grudge against everyone after all…”

“I don’t think of anything like that. The thing I want to say is this. Friendly fire? That’s wrong. That was a magic bullet clearly specifically cast with me as target.”

“Eh? Specifically cast? Targeted, you say?”

Aiko’s expression said she couldn’t understand what he meant. But, Hajime left words that mercilessly pushed Aiko’s worry further.

“It means, a classmate was trying to kill me.”
“Kh!?”

Aiko was stunned and her face paled, “I only know that the culprit is someone related to Shirasaki, it’s someone who’s able to kill another person out of envy. Because she is still okay, it’s good to advise Shirasaki to be careful of an attack from behind.” After leaving this message, Hajime went out of the room.

Shin, there was an illusion of cold wind blowing inside the room, and Aiko embraced her own body with both arms. There was a possibility that one of her precious students tried to kill a companion. Furthermore, they used a cowardly method by aiming at his back when he was at the brink of death. For Aiko, who treasured her students, it was something she couldn’t accept easily. But, she couldn’t deny Hajime’s words without any evidence. Her mind that wanted to believe her students clashed with each other.

With her worries deepening, Aiko’s sleepless night increased.

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## Chapter 7 : Northern Mountain Range Area

Daybreak.

With the waning moonlight, the eastern sky began to lit up. Hajime, Yue, and Shia, these three people completed their travel preparations, and soon they would leave the “Water Fairy Inn.” In their hands were packaged riceballs that could be eaten as they move. Even though it was still early in the morning, no one wore unpleasant faces as Foss prepared their breakfast. It was just as expected of a high-class inn. Its management was admired even by Hajime and his party, as they thanked him without reserve once they received the breakfast.

Within the morning mist, Hajime and his party faced towards Ul’s northern gate. There was a highway that stretched from this place to the northern mountain range area. It would take at least a full day by horse, but they would arrive in three to four hours using the magic-driven two-wheeler.

It was the fifth day since they had lost contact with Will Kudeta and his party, who had gone to investigate northern mountain range area. Survival was hopeless. Hajime also thought Will and his party’s odds of survival were low, but there was still a chance. Ilwa’s image of Hajime would climb to a pinnacle if he brought him back alive, which was why he began searching as soon as possible. Fortunately, the weather was good. An ideal day to search for someone.

With sounds of activity beginning to resound inside the buildings, they advanced towards the northern gate, and could finally see the gate. He narrowed his eyes because he could sense signs of people near the northern gate. They didn’t move or anything, but only hung around the gate.

What he saw through the morning mist… … were Aiko and the six students.

“… … Although I can guess what you want, let me hear it anyway… … What are you doing?”

Hajime and his party looked at Aiko and the students with half-opened eyes. For a moment, Aiko twitched from the pressure in the atmosphere, but she still faced Hajime with a firm attitude. After having a discussion, the students; Sonobe Yuka, Sugawara Taeko, Miyazaki Nana, Tamai Atsushi, Aikawa Noboru, and Kawahara Akira, drew near Aiko.

“We are also going. You’re searching for missing people, right? It’s better to have more people.”

“No. I am okay with you going. But, I refuse to go together.”

“Wh-Why?”

“Simply because our pace is different. I don’t want to match your slow speed.”

If one were to look closely, they would notice that there were several horses readied behind Aiko and the others. For a moment they thought, “Was it because he cannot ride horses?”, as they doubted Hajime. Since it was trivial, he just let it go through their heads. No matter whether he could ride it or not, its speed couldn’t compare to the magic-driven two-wheeler, after all. However, the virtual leader of Ai-chan’s royal guard who loved her; Sonobe Yuka, snapped at Hajime’s objection. Apparently, she had forgotten her debt and intimidation from Hajime yesterday because of the strength of her love towards Ai-chan.

“Wait, how could you say that? Even if Nagumo doesn’t think well of us, there’s no need to involve Ai-chan sensei.”

Because of the incredibly irrelevant objection, Hajime let out, “Haa?”, with an amazed expression. Hajime thought it’d be a hassle to explain, so he silently took out the magic-driven two-wheeler from “Treasure Box”.

Suddenly, a big bike appeared from the void, Aiko and the students could only let out stupefied looks.

“Do you understand now? Yesterday I said that I absolutely don’t care about whatever you guys want to do. That’s why there’s no need to snarl at me. It’s just like I said before, our speed is different.”

The magic-driven two-wheeler’s profound form, and maybe because it was an existence that didn’t belong in this different world, made Aiko and the onlooking students speechless. There, the bike-lover in the class; Aikawa asked Hajime while somewhat excited.

“D-Did Nagumo make this just like the gun from yesterday?”

“Something like that. We are going now, so move aside.”

Hajime answered him perfunctorily as he was about to embark, but Aiko kept standing still. Aiko wanted to tag along with Hajime and his party no matter what it took. She had two reasons. One was to search for the truth about what Hajime said last night. Aiko couldn’t just overlook the words, “A classmate was trying to kill him”, so she wanted find out if it was the truth or just Hajime’s misunderstanding. If it was the truth she wanted to know what Hajime was going to do. She wanted to hear more details from Hajime for the sake of avoiding any accidents that might happen in the future. Once the search ended, she didn’t know when she’d be able to meet Hajime and his party again, so she mustn’t miss this chance.

The other reason was, because Shimizu Yukitoshi was currently still missing. Although they had tried to find any scrap of information without leaving even a stone unturned, there were no sightings of him in any of the nearby towns and villages. However, because there was no one living in the northern mountain range area in the first place, she remembered there was no information gathered there. Even if it was on his own accord or by accident, she naturally never thought he’d enter the northern mountain range area. But with the thought he’d left on his own, she thought of searching for Shimizu’s trail while Hajime and his party looked for the missing people.

By the way, it was partly a coincidence that Sonobe and the other students were here. Aiko had wanted to go to the gate earlier than Hajime, in order to ambush him, so she tried to leave

the inn before dawn, only to be seen by Sonobe Yuka who was going to the toilet. Because Aiko equipped herself with travelling gear and tried to leave at such an unreasonable time, Sonobe Yuka of Ai-chan's bodyguards questioned her without letting her tell a lie. As the result, because they couldn't just leave Ai-chan to the changed Hajime. Sonobe woke up all of the students and tried to join the search mission. It should be noted that they had left a letter to the Knights, telling them to watch the house, since it seemed like they would only strike up more trouble if they went with Hajime and his party. Though it wasn't known how they'd react…

Aiko drew near Hajime and whispered her decision to him. Hajime moved his face close to Aiko's because he didn't want the contents and only the contents to be heard by others, but when he looked carefully he noticed she used thick makeup to conceal dark shadows. Surely, she was hardly able to sleep having heard Hajime's story.

"Nagumo-kun, because sensei is a teacher, it's necessary to hear the details from Nagumo-kun. That's why, I won't let you go until you tell me everything, I'll chase you if you try to run away. For Nagumo-kun, won't that be troublesome? I don't care if you tell me while we are travelling or when we are searching, so will you spare some time? If you do that, then it'll be as Nagumo-kun said, it'll be good bye after this town… … for the time being."

Hajime could see the light of determination in Aiko's eyes, and he slightly regretted his last words from last night resulted in this failure. He understood Aiko's ability to take action (Although she's often idle). If he tried to deceive her or run away, she'd likely use the Guard Knights to search for him.

He averted his gaze from Aiko and looked up at the sky, which was becoming more and more bright. Without throwing away the possibility of Will's survival, he regretted time had passed while they argued. Hajime let out a deep sigh. He admitted that he'd just reaped what he'd sown, and faced Aiko again.

"Okay. I'll let you go with us. Even though I say that, I don't have time to speak with you…"

"I don't care. I only want to hear it from Nagumo-kun's mouth."

"Haa, geez, sensei won't give up at all. Whatever and wherever, always a teacher, huh."

"Of course!"

Aiko, "Munh!", stuck out her chest with a joyful look when Hajime gave up. Because it seemed the negotiations had gone well, the students showed relieved looks.

"… … Hajime, are you going to bring them?"

"Aa, this person is a "teacher" even here. She will not compromise anything regarding her students. If I just leave her, it'll absolutely become troublesome in the future."

"Ho~, she is a good teacher who thinks of her students~"

Because Hajime had given up, Yue and Shia were surprised and asked him. Following that, having heard Hajime's words accompanied with a bitter smile, the eyes with which they

looked at Aiko, had changed slightly. They were filled with some respect. Even Hajime thought Aiko's attitude as their "teacher", which couldn't be shaken at all was not a bad thing. For example, she didn't find any value in categorizing the classmates and students, so he thought of her as an adult who should be respected.

"But, this bike can only hold three people, right? What should we do?"

What Sonobe pointed out was the truth. It was out of the question in regards to time, to match the horses' speed, and it was impossible to leave Yue or Shia behind to bring Aiko instead. Reluctantly, Hajime put the magic-driven two-wheeler into "Treasure Box", and pulled out the magic-driven four-wheeler in its stead.

*Pinpon*, Hajime made it vanish and at the same time a big object appeared, probably because they knew he'd used an artifact, Aiko and the students were not surprised at all. Having seen the current Hajime, who on Earth could imagine he was once called "incompetent." Sonobe and the students received the message "Those who are unable to get on will be in the carrier", looked at Hajime who quickly got on the driver's seat with complicated expressions.

* * *

They moved forward on the road expanding straight into the northern mountain range area using the hummer-like magic-driven four-wheeler. Even though the highway was a bad road, thanks to the suspension and ground transmutation feature it shared with the two-wheeler, most of the impact was nulled. Naturally, the male students, aboard the hard metal luggage carrier attached to the back didn't seem to be in discomfort.

By the way, although there was the "Treasure Box", the reason he specifically installed the carrier was because it was a set with the gatling that'd be used while driving, it was his aspiration. A small commitment from Hajime.

For the seating inside the vehicle, Hajime naturally sat in the driver's seat, while Aiko sat at his side and Yue was next to her. Aiko sat beside Hajime for the sake of hearing his story. Although Aiko seemed to not have told it to the other students, she wanted to hear about it sooner.

Originally, the seat next to Hajime belonged to Yue, but Yue already knew the contents of the story Hajime would tell, so reluctantly, she gave her seat to Aiko. But, Aiko and Yue were small, so there was still a considerable amount of space in the seat.

In contrast, Shia who was seated in the back seat looked slightly cramped. Shia aside, Sonobe and Sugawara had voluptous bodies, so they took up a lot of space. The slender Miyazaki looked so uncomfortable.

But, the one who felt the most uncomfortable was Shia. She had been placed between Sonobe and Sugawara for a while now, and they interrogated her about her relationship with Hajime. Love between different races in another world was something female high schoolers wouldn't miss hearing. They were so curious that they repeatedly asked Shia, and the flustered Shia tried her best to answer their questions.

On the other side, Hajime and Aiko's conversation also reached its climax.

Having heard the situation in detail about that time from Hajime, while she knew the possibility of magic being fired intentionally was high, Aiko was still unable to believe it and was troubled by it. When he heard her, Hajime only snorted as his reply.

For now, he already guessed it was someone like Hiyama, and although Hajime's guess was closest to the right answer, he only said this was one of the possibilities. After all, Aiko wouldn't be able to arrive at such a conclusion, and even if the culprit could be specified, how could she restore the mind of someone who attempted murder? How could one compensate for that? She was troubled, with those thoughts on her mind.

She groaned because she was troubled by this, but due to the soft seat and vibrating vehicle inviting her to sleep Aiko started off on her journey to the world of dreams before she was aware of it, *zuruzuru*, her body slipped until she fell onto Hajime's lap.

Normally, he'd send her flying because it's a hindrance, but because he felt it awkward to act rude toward Aiko, he hesitated over what to do, then he decided to leave her as is. After all, Hajime's information was the main cause of Aiko's sleep deprivation. So if it's just this, he felt that it couldn't be helped, as he displayed unusual generosity.

"… … Hajime is gentle to Aiko."

"… … Well, it is someone I'm indebted to, so something like this is okay."

"… … Fu~n."

"Yue?"

"… …"

"Yue-san, please don't ignore me."

"… … Next, I will also use the lap pillow."

"… … Okay."

Even though Aiko was still lap pillowed, Hajime and Yue were able to enter a world of their own. In the back seat, the female high schoolers watched them while going "kya kya," followed by a sulking rabbit-eared girl. From now on, they were entering a dangerous zone where unknown accidents might occur but no one thought about it as they made such a noise.

* * *

The northern mountain range area.

Several mountains extended with altitudes ranging from 1000 to 8000 meters. Plants and trees were somehow able to grow there. It was a mysterious place with a scattered environment. The colour would make one remember the mountains of Japan in autumn, and the other area was filled with trees with fresh green leaves, just like in mid-summer, but there were also places with withered trees in contrast.

Moreover, even if one could see past the mountain range, another mountain range stretched out beyond it. There were more and more of them to the north. Currently four such mountain ranges were confirmed, and beyond that was a completely unknown area. As to how far it went, a certain adventurer aimed to cross the fifth mountain range, however, demonic beasts got stronger and stronger with every passing mountain range, and in the end, there was no sign of success.

Incidentally, the highest mountain was the "God Mountain". Currently, the place Hajime and the others had first arrived in when they came into this world was 1,600 kilometers east of the God Mountain. The vivid colors of red and yellow of the fresh leaves on the trees made them easy on the eyes. If a knowledgeable person were to look carefully, he would find spices and edible plants in the area. They were what enriched Ul town, a truly bountiful mountain.

Hajime and the others stopped the four-wheeler at the foot of the mountain, and were charmed by the artistic display of nature's magnificent colors for a while. One of the girls let out a "Ho~". Some time ago, Aiko was apologizing while blushing, after making the blunder of sleeping in a student's lap. But having seen the fresh scenery, she succeeded in placing the 'black history' into the far recesses of her mind.

Hajime also wanted to slowly appreciate this, so he put the four-wheeler back into the "Treasure Box", and pulled out certain things in its stead.

Those were, imitation models of birds which spanned 30 cm each, and a ring with a small crystal embedded on it. Each of the models had a gray crystal buried in a part of their heads.

Hajime put on the ring, took out four identical models, and slowly threw them into the air. With that, one would assume they'd fall due to gravity. However, these fake birds were floating in place. Aiko and the students let out an "Ah".

The four mechanical birds began to turn around on their spots and flew towards the mountain.

"Umm, those are…."

Having seen the model birds flying away without any sound, Aiko represented the other students and inquired something of him.

Hajime answered her with "Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes", and just like the vehicles and gun, they were items that were out of place in this different world..

The imitation model of birds called "Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes", were something Hajime made in reference to the remotely operated Golem Knights from Raisen's Great Dungeon. They were also produced using the materials he got there. Using Creation magic, he granted minerals Gravity magic because he didn't have the aptitude for using the magic himself, and they became minerals capable of neutralizing gravity as they floated. And thus, gravity stones were created. Furthermore, the induction stones which used to control the Golem Knights were used. In addition, Farsight crystals were also installed in each part of their heads. The mineral used in the eyes of Golem Knights were Farsight stones. Similar to induction stones, it was a mineral capable of reflecting scenes witnessed by other fragments of the crystal, regardless of distance, so long as the same type of magical power was supplied to them. It seemed this was what Miledi used to determine the detailed position of Hajime

and his party. Hajime installed the farsight crystal inside his magic eye, and he became capable of seeing scenery the “Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes” could see.

In the first place, there’s a limit to the processing performance of a human’s brain, using four simultaneously was the limit, allowing them to move around in the sky. It’s a complete mystery as to how Miledi was able to operate 50 Golems at once.

Tentatively, His brain’s processing performance had been boosted when he awakened the”Light Speed”, if he only had to control one plane, he could do precise movements. Moreover, when he uses “Light Speed”, he could make seven planes do precise movements within a certain time limit.

This time, he took out the Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes because being able to search from the air is useful, since the scope of search was too vast. Having watched the Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes fly far away, Aiko and the students tried to stop being surprised by Hajime’s actions, however, it was a vow that might never be fulfilled.

Hajime and the others advanced into the mountain using the same path used by the adventurers. The sighting information of demonic beasts were just slightly beyond the other side of mountain path. It’s in the vicinity of the sixth and seventh mountain. Because of that, Will’s party of adventurers should be investigating around those parts. Having thought of this, they quickly advanced through the mountain path at a high pace, after Hajime released the Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes in that area.

Hajime and the others reached the sixth mountain in almost an hour, and stopped. The reason was because it was necessary to search for any traces around the area…

“Haa haa, i-is it a break… … kehoh, haa haa.”

“Zee— zee— Are you okay… … Ai-chan sensei, zee— zee—”

“Ueppu, is it okay to rest now? Haa haa, it’s okay, right? I’ll take a break now, kay?”

“… … Hyuu— Hyuu.”

“Geho geho, Nagumo-kun and his party are monsters….”

Aiko and her students had less physical strength than what he had expected, so it was necessary to take a break. Naturally, Aiko and her students’ statuses were originally several times higher than the average people of this world, so they didn’t get exhausted until they climbed the sixth mountain. It’s just that the movement speed of Hajime and his party was just too fast, that’s why they climbed the mountain using all their might, and when they noticed it, their physical strength was exhausted and their legs became wobbly.

Aiko and her students desperately gasped for breath on all fours, and Hajime glanced at them with a somewhat troubled look. In any case, he had decided it was necessary to search the surroundings, as they went to the nearby river to let them rest. He was able to determine the location because of the information from the Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes. After stating the location to Aiko and her students, who were still breathing roughly, he and his party advanced towards the river. The probability of Will’s party having rested there was also high.

With Yue and Shia in the lead, they strayed from the mountain path and onto the mountain. Rustle, rustle. The sound of fallen leaves was enjoyable as they continued to walk between the trees, and before long they could hear the sound of a river. It was a sound pleasing to the ears. Shia's ears swayed happily.

Finally Hajime and his party reached the river. It was at a bigger scale compared to a small river. Shia, who held the highest search ability, observed the surroundings while Hajime once again used the Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes to search for any presences, and there was no sign of demonic beasts nearby. They relaxed for now. Hajime and the others were sitting on the rock in the riverbank, then they talked about their search plans. Yue took off her shoes and put her feet into the river after saying "Just a little". It was her selfishness to enjoy the moment. Hajime overlooked it because Aiko and her students still hadn't caught up to them. He's a man who spoiled Yue. Shia also took this chance.

Having thought of a possibility, they moved upstream along the riverbank. Hajime moved the Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes upstream while he looked at Yue, pasha pasha, playing with the river water with her bare feet. Although Shia was also barefooted, she only put them in the water. The feeling of the river flowing seemed to tickle her.

Aiko and her students, who finally regained their breaths, arrived. They stayed in place as they stared at Hajime and his party. However, the three male students shouted "Is this Heaven?", with sparkling eyes as they saw the barefooted Yue and Shia, while the female students returned to look at them with cold eyes. It made the male students shudder. When they noticed the gazes from Tamai and the others, Yue and Shia got out of the river.

Aiko and her students were diligently replenishing their moisture in the riverbank. Because of the displeasing gazes from Tamai and the male students a while ago, Yue and Shia returned slight glares, and the male students trembled as they averted their gazes. Having seen such a spectacle, Aiko and the female students looked at Hajime with warm eyes. Especially Sonobe and the female students. Since they had heard various things from Shia, they wore very annoying expressions.

"Fufu, Nagumo-kun truly treasures Yue-san and Shia-san."

Aiko said such things while smiling. Hajime wanted to say something, but stopped and just shrugged his shoulders when he saw the depressed Sonobe and the other male students. Yue was the one who took action in his stead. As if it were the most natural thing in the world, she suddenly sat on Hajime's lap.

"… Nn."

She was so pleased that she entrusted all of her weight to Hajime. It could also be called her proof of trust. Seeing that, Shia, who looked lonely, embraced Hajime from behind. Aiko's cheeks immediately blushed because a pink-colored space was generated. Sonobe and the female students were shouting, "Kya— kya—", in excitement. Tamai and the male students ground their teeth.

Hajime being Hajime, without shaking the two off, just averted his gaze. He seemed to be slightly embarrassed. However, Hajime's expression suddenly sharpened in the next moment.

"… … That is."
"Nn… … did you find something?"

Having heard Hajime's muttering while he was looking far into the distance, Yue asked him. Because of his appearance, Aiko and the others blinked their eyes wondering what happened.

"On the river's upstream… … is that a shield? Also, there are bags… … it looks like they're still new. It might be a hit. Yue, Shia, let's go."

"Nn…."

"Yes!"

Hajime and his party harmoniously stood up and began to prepare for departure. Aiko and the students actually still wanted to rest, and although they knew they were overdoing it, they couldn't just stand still once they saw that Hajime had found some clues. They laborously raised their still exhausted waists and once again desperately tried to follow Hajime and his party, who were advancing upstream with blistering speed.

At the location Hajime and his party arrived at, just as he confirmed with the Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes, small round shields made of metal and bags were scattered around. However, there were dents on the round shields, and the bags were torn up in the middle with their strings pulled out.

Hajime and his party carefully examined their surroundings. Then they found some nearby trees with their barks peeled off of them They were roughly at the two meters of height. It was apparent that the bark was in such state because something had scratched it off, and at that height, it clearly wasn't the work of humans. Hajime instructed Shia to use her search ability to the fullest, while also using his own perception skill as they approached the barkless trees.

Advancing ahead, they found signs of combat one after another. There were trees and branches that were broken in half. There were also plants that had been trampled, and furthermore, there were fragments of blades and blood scattered around. Everytime they found such traces, the expressions on Aiko and the students' faces stiffened. For a while, they chased after the signs of combat, and Shia suddenly found something shining.

"Hajime-san, this, isn't this a pendant?"

"Nn? Aa… … it's probably something they left behind. Let me confirm it."

After he washed off the dirt from the pendant he had received from Shia, he noticed it was not just a pendant but also a locket. He removed the clasp and saw what was inside, it was a woman's photograph. Perhaps, she was someone's lover or wife. Even though it was not a significant clue, it was not an old one but a recent one… … it could belong to someone from the adventurers' party. That's why it'd be kept for now.

Afterwards, they found more articles of the deceased or so they called them, but they only collected items that would allow one to identify their owners. Having searched around for a

while, eventually day turned into night, and the time for them to set up camp was approaching.

Even now, there were no signs of life aside from the wild animals. Although they were cautious because of how Will and his party encountered and were attacked by demonic beasts, there were no sign of demonic beasts in their immediate surroundings. Their current location was between the eighth and ninth mountain. From what was said about crossing the mountains, usually, they would encounter one or two demonic beasts, so Hajime and the others could feel the eeriness of this situation.

After a while, the Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes once again found a location with abnormalities. There were leftovers of great destruction 300 meters to the east. Hajime urged everyone to rush to that location.

There was a big river. A small waterfall could be seen upstream, and the volume of water was immense, with a violent current. Originally, it was likely to flow straight towards the foot of the mountain, but currently, there was a large and small river branching along the way. It was as though it was gouged by a laser or something, from the flank.

The reason they had such impressions was because the gouged part was a straight line, while the surrounding trees and ground were scorched. Furthermore, as if they had received a big impact, a lot of trees were partly broken and thrown tens of meters to the side. On the riverside, there were big footprints measuring more than 30 centimeters.

“It seems the real combat happened here… … These footprints were of large bipedal demonic beasts… … Surely, there were demonic beast called Brutal beyond the second mountain after this. But, the way the ground was gouged….”

What Hajime described as Brutals were something similar to the Orcs and Ogres in RPG. Although they didn’t have high intelligence, they took action as group. Because they had a weaker version of the peculiar magic; “Vajra”, called “Strong Wall,” they were recognized as quite powerful enemies. They usually descend into the second mountain of the mountain range, but these demonic beasts never came into towns. In addition, they didn’t have any attacks that could make such river tributaries.

Hajime thought of the Brutal as he observed the footprints, he hesitated whether to go upstream or downstream. Although Will’s party had likely to escaped upstream, he thought it would be hard for them to run upstream after such combat. He doubted that they would physically and mentally run further from town.

Hajime decided to direct the Unmanned Reconnaissance Planes upstream while they head downstream. Even though the Brutals’ footprints were on the riverside, the possibility of Will and his party jumping into the river was high. If so, he thought they’d likely be swept away because of physical exhaustion.

The others also agreed with Hajime’s speculations, and descended towards downstream on the riverside.

Afterwards, they encountered a much more splendid waterfall compared to the one from before. Hajime and the others nimbly descended from the cliff on the side of the waterfall and

landed on the vicinity of the basin. The refreshing wind peculiar to a waterfall healed their minds and bodies which were exhausted from a day of searching. Then, Hajime felt a reaction from his “Sign Perception.”

” ! This is….”
“… … Hajime?”

Yue immediately reacted and asked him. For a while, Hajime concentrated while closing his eyes. Following that, while slowly opening his eyes, he let out a surprised voice.

“Oi oi, seriously. The Sign Perception picked up something. From the feeling, I can say it’s a human. The location is… … in the interior of waterfall’s basin.”

“You mean there are survivors!”

Hajime nodded towards Shia’s words of confirmation. He answered, “Only one person”, when Yue asked for the number of people. Aiko and her students were also surprised. It was something natural. Although the odds of survival were not zero, they actually didn’t expect any at all. It was the fifth day since Will’s party had gone missing. It was a miracle for even one of them to remain alive.

“Yue, please.”
“… … Nn”

While watching the waterfall basin, Hajime called Yue. Yue was able to guess Hajime’s intentions from just those few words, and she shook her right hand as the magic’s trigger.

“”Wave Castle,” “Wind Wall”.”

Then, the water in the waterfall and its basin began to split in two just like the Red Sea in Moses’ legend. Moreover, the scattered water was perfectly brushed off by the wall of wind. It was the result of water magic making a high-pressure wall of water called “Wave Castle,” and wind magic called “Wind Wall.”

Without chanting, magic of two different attributes were activated at the same time. Having seen how they were used, Aiko and her students, although they didn’t remember how many times they had done it, dropped their jaws in astonishment. Surely, the Hebrew people also displayed such expressions.

Because her magic power was not infinite, Hajime urged Aiko and the others on, as he led them into the interior of the waterfall basin’s cave. The cave they entered immediately curved upward, and they arrived at quite a large cavity. Water and light poured down from the ceiling, and the fallen water flowed into the water pool below. The reason it didn’t overflow was surely because they continued flowing inside.

They discovered a man lying down in the innermost part of the cave. When they arrived at the man’s side, they confirmed that he was a young man, around 20 years of age. Although he looked like a noble, he currently looked pale and displayed the complexion of a dead person. However, there was no large injury, and because there was food remaining inside his bag, he was simply sleeping. His bad complexion was surely related to how he was the only one here.

Having seen the anxious Aiko, and because Hajime wanted to immediately identify the young man's identity, he used his artificial arm, while restraining his power to the limit, to flick the sleeping young man's forehead.

*BACHIKONh!!*

"Guwah!!"

He screamed as he woke up, the young man writhed while covering his forehead with both hands. Aiko and her students shuddered because of the powerful and merciless forehead flick. Hajime ignored Aiko and the students, and approached the young man with teary eyes to ask his name.

"You, are you Will Kudeta? The third son of Count Kudeta."
"Ah, eh, you are, just how on earth did you guys get here…"

Because the young man only blinked as he couldn't grasp the situation, Hajime once again made a stance to flick his forehead and slowly aimed at it.

"Answer my question. I'll increase the power by 20 percent every time you say something other than the answer."

"Eh, eh!?"

"You, are you Will Kudeta?"

"Umm, uwah, yes! That's right! I am Will Kudeta! Yes!"

For a moment, when the young man hesitated in answering, Hajime's eyes gave off a dangerous light, and he immediately thrust out his left hand. The panicked young man immediately announced his name. Apparently, he was truly the person in question. He seemed to have miraculously survived.

"I see. I am Hajime. Nagumo Hajime. I have come here on the request of the head of Fhuren's branch guild, Ilwa Chang. (For my convenience) It's good that you're alive."

"Ilwa-san!? Is that so. Once again… … I am indebted to that person… …Umm, I am thankful to you. You must be a remarkable person to receive a request directly from Ilwa-san."

Will voiced gratitude with respectful eyes. It seemed he didn't mind the forehead flick with unbelievable power from a little while ago. If so, he might be an unexpectedly good person. A great difference than a pig from somewhere. After that, having introduced everyone, they heard the story of what happened to Will.

This was the summary.

Five days ago, Will's party came to the vicinity of the upper part of fifth mountain using the mountain path just like Hajime and the others. Suddenly, they encountered ten Brutals. As expected, they couldn't win against the number of Brutals they encountered, so Will's party

tried to withdraw. But, the number of attacking Brutals kept increasing, and they were by the river of the sixth mountain when they noticed it. Then, the Brutals encircled them, so for the sake of escaping from the encirclement. Two people; trifling and unimportant soldiers, were sacrificed After that, when they arrived at a big river, despair appeared.

It appeared to be a jet-black Dragon. As soon as Will's party came along the river bank, the Black Dragon let out breath, and Will was blown off into the river by the attack. From what he saw while being swept away, one person vanished because of the breath, while the other two were attacked from both sides, by Brutals from the back and the Dragon from the front.

Will fell into the basin of the waterfall after he was swept away as is, he went into the cave he had found by chance, and he seemed to have been hiding here ever since.

Somehow, it sort of resembled what may or may not have happened to a certain someone.

Will, as he told them that, was feeling proud of it, and then suddenly started to sob. It was not something unreasonable, the senior adventurers taught him the know-how for adventurers and took care of him even though one of them wore a displeased face. Without confirming their safety, the pathetic him was only able to tremble in fear and wait for help to come, the him who felt relieved because his rescue came while his companions were dead, various feelings continuously emerged and his tears overflowed.

"I-I am d wost. Wuu, aljo evyone ish ded, I din't ju anyching. Hikk, fer me chu be d cole curvibor… oso, sniff… chu fil relif… I—!"
(I am the worst. Wuu, although everyone is dead, I didn't do anything. Hikk, for me to be the sole survivor… Also, sniff… to feel relieved… I—!)

Will's wails echoed inside the cave. No one could say anything to him. Toward the Will who blamed himself with tears flowing down his face, they didn't know which words would be good for him. The students looked at Will with sorrowful expressions, while Aiko gently patted Will's back. Yue was expressionless as usual, while Shia looked troubled.

But, at the moment Will found himself at a loss for words, an unexpected person moved. It was Hajime. Hajime, approached Will and gripped Will's collar. He used his inhuman strength to hang him mid-air. Following that, towards the Will who was in pain because he couldn't breathe, Hajime spoke with an unexpectedly permeating voice.

"What is wrong with wanting to live? What is wrong with being glad because you're alive? That wish and feeling are something natural and inevitable. Even more so because you're a human."

"B-but… … I was…."

"Even so, if you're worried about those who died… … then continue to live. From now on keep living as you struggle, and struggle as if you're going to die. If you do that, someday… … there might come a day when you understand the reason why you survived today."

"… … Keep living."

Even while crying, Will repeated Hajime's words in blank surprise. Hajime violently threw Will down, he tsukkomi'ed himself with, "What have I done," his words just now, more than half of them were directed towards himself. Will's situation was a little similar to his, and for him to belittle his own life was like saying, "It's wrong for you to survive," towards Hajime, so he was inadvertently angered.

Of course it was just his persecution complex. More than half of it was said on an outburst of anger, so it wasn't different from a child's tantrum. Even though he had seen through various things, Hajime was still a 17 year old boy, and there was still more for him to learn. Hajime knew he had fallen into slight self-loathing. Having seen such a Hajime, Yue came to his side and grasped Hajime's hand tightly.

"… … It's okay, Hajime isn't wrong."

"… … Yue."

"… … Live to your best. Keep living on. Together with me, right?"

"… … Haha, ah of course. I'll keep on living no matter what might happen… … so, don't leave me alone."

"… … Nn."

They left Will who was still talking to himself, then Hajime and Yue created a world with just the two of them. He couldn't match Yue, and Hajime gently stroked Yue's cheek, while Yue was also being spoiled and let his hand stroke her cheek. Not understanding what happened to cause such a development, Aiko and her students could only blink, while Shia watched Hajime and Yue with half-opened eyes.

The chaotic situation continued for a while (thanks to Hajime's recklessness), and somehow everyone managed to regain their senses. The party then decided to immediately descend the mountain. There was still more than an hour before sunset, so if they hurried, they would likely reach the foot of the mountain by the time the sun set.

Although they were concerned about the Brutals and the jet-black Dragon, those were outside Hajime and his party's mission. It was unthinkable to continue the investigation while having to protect those with low combat potential. Will also understood that he would just be a hindrance, so he understood that they must withdraw. Although the students insisted on continuing the investigation because of their slight sense of justice that came from the troubled townspeople, Aiko stubbornly refused to investigate because of the great danger the Black Dragon and Brutals posed. In the end, they descended the mountain.

However, nothing proceeds smoothly. Once again, they were passionately welcomed when the party got out of the waterfall basin with Yue's magic.

*"GUuRURURURU."*

Letting out a low groan, with its whole body covered in jet-black scales, its golden eyes glared at them in mid-air while fluttering its wings… … it was the "Dragon."

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## Chapter 8 : Black Dragon Subjugation?

The dragon's length was at least seven meters. With its whole body covered in jet-black scales, there were five sharp claws on each of its long forelegs. Big wings grew from its back which were slightly shining as they were clad with magic power. Every time it flapped the wings an unbelievable gust of wind appeared, even after taking the size of it's wings into account. However, its most impressive feature was its golden eyes that floated in the night like moons. Its eyes that closed vertically like a reptile's, were dangerously narrowed as they released beautiful light.

The golden eyes were glaring at Hajime and the others from the air. A low groan was leaked from the Black Dragon's throat. Its overwhelming power couldn't be compared to the Hyveria he saw at the bottom of Raisen Grand Canyon's ravine. Although Hyverias themselves were generally recognized as troublesome, high level demonic beasts, when compared to the Black Dragon before them, it was as if they were small birds. Its majestic appearance made it suited as the king of the sky.

Just like a frog being stared at by a snake, Aiko and the others stiffened. Will was especially pale faced and *gatagata*, trembled as if he would collapse at any moment. Inside his mind, he might be having flashback from when he was attacked.

Hajime had already seen the claw marks from the Black Dragon's attack that created branches off the river. He thought it must be a very strong demonic beast, but feeling the magic power and pressure from the Black Dragon in front of his eyes, he revised that it was three times of what he had imagine. Remembering the demonic beasts in the Abyss, it was not as strong as the Hydra, but he could feel that it had the same power as class of demonic beasts from 90th floor.

The Black Dragon confirmed Will's appearance and girori, sharpened its glare. Following that, in front of the stiffened humans, it slowly lifted its head and concentrated its magic inside the opened jaws where sharp fangs lined up.

*KYUuWAaAAA!!*

A mysterious timbre began to dye the sunset and reverberated throughout the mountains. Inside Hajime's mind, he remembered the Breath attack that erased the adventurers on the river.

"Kh! Evacuate!"

Having issued the warning, Hajime immediately leaped away from his location to evacuate. Yue and Shia followed after him. However, some people were unable to react to his warning, no, in this case it could be said most of them.

Aiko, the students, and even Will were stiffened and didn't move from their spots. Aiko and the students' bodies were unable to keep up with such a sudden event, while Will was bound by fear that made him unable to even avert his gaze.

"Tch!!"

"Hajime!"

"Hajime-san!"

Hajime issued an order to Yue and Shia using "Telepathy," then he suddenly returned to his previous location using "Ground Shrinker" and stood between Aiko's party and the dragon. Normally, he'd just leave. He didn't feel bad about abandoning Aiko, rather, he didn't understand why she came here to search for Will who miraculously survived. But, his "job" was to bring him back if he was alive. That's why Hajime couldn't abandon him.

Hajime took out a two meters, coffin-like, large shield from the "Treasure Box" into the empty space, he thrust his left arm and linked it to the shield. As he poured his magic power, on the lower part of the shield gashun!, a stake appeared. Following that, it mightily pierced the ground.

Immediately, a straight, black, laser-like Breath fired from the dragon. The Breath didn't let out any sound and immediately reached Hajime's large shield. The impact accompanied by a tremendous roar and the heatwave released melted the ground around the large shield.

"Guu! Ooooo!!"

Hajime let out a roar filled with spirit as he resisted the Breath's pressure. Before one was aware, Hajime's body and the large shield let out bright red light. It came from Hajime's "Vajra." However, the Breath seemed to carry greater power, so after he resisted it for a while, his defense was penetrated as the large shield received a direct hit.

Even so, the large shield still endured the Breath. Power that penetrated Hajime's "Vajra" and heat gradually melted its surface, and it'd fall apart at any time, but Hajime used "Transmutation" to restore it. He wouldn't let any more breakthrough than this.

The stake that penetrated the ground to fix his location was defeated by the pressure, as he gradually pushed back. Hajime transmuted his soles into spikes, and once again, Hajime used Vajra to resist the Breath. The large shield was connected to his outstretched left arm, and he also affixed his right arm to it.

The large shield Hajime took out was using Taur ore as its main material while Star ore was placed in-between and the exterior was coated with Azanthium. Because Hajime was a Transmutation Master, even with an attack that exceed Azanthium's durability, it's possible to restore it if it could endure even for a few seconds. Even if that was penetrated, the Star ore in the second layer had a nature to strengthened if supplied with magic power, and Hajime's magic power wouldn't allow anymore penetration.

That's why, the Breath that could exceed Azanthium wouldn't be able to destroy the large shield. However, it couldn't be said that power wouldn't be able to blown the large shield's

user away. In fact, Hajime who possessed inhuman power was gradually pushed back. On the ground were the gouged out marks from the large shield's stake that pierced it and Hajime's feet.

If this keep up, Hajime who equipped with large shield and "Vajra," along with his inhuman endurance wouldn't receive considerable damage. But if Hajime lost the shield, Aiko and the others would fall prey to the breath, and disappear from this world without even leaving a speck of dust behind.

When Hajime became somewhat impatient, an unexpectedly soft feeling was transmitted to his back. As he stole a glance over his shoulder, somehow, Aiko had jumped towards his back and supported him desperately. Apparently, while Hajime was resisting the Breath, she regained her senses and jumped to support Hajime who was gradually being pushed back. Having seen that, the students and Will also jumped to support Hajime, in panic.

The Breath continued even now. The surrounding water in the river was evaporated by the heatwave, the soil and stones on the riverbank were blown away by the impact and in awful state. From the time he received the direct hit from the Breath, a little time had passed. Hajime felt it had happen for an eternity, but actually no longer than ten seconds had passed. While he grit his teeth and thought about it, finally, he heard the long-awaited voice.

""Cursed Sky"."

At the moment the magic's name was announced, a black, swirling orb of four meters in diameter appeared above the Black Dragon. The deep darkness that could suck in anyone who saw it, immediately fell and crushed the Black Dragon into the ground.

"GuuRUaAAA!?"

A roar came as the Black Dragon sprawled on the ground, and its Breath was interrupted when it raised a scream from the impact. However, the swirling orb, as if saying that's not enough, didn't disappear and exerted extreme pressure on the Black Dragon, sinking it into the ground.

"Cursed Sky"

It was Yue's Gravity magic. By creating a swirling gravity ball, it crushed its target using supergravity that was proportional to the amount of consumed magic power. It was a convenient magic that could change its direction using the gravitational force.

The Gravity magic didn't consume much magic power if targeted towards the caster itself. However, if the gravity ball was used to attack things, space, and other people, just like what happened just now, it consumed huge amount of magic power and Yue at the least need ten seconds to prepare it. Because Yue herself still hadn't completely master this magic, the invocation time and magic consumption could still become much more efficient by training.

The sky king was crucified on the ground, it painfully braced its limbs to somehow escape from the pressuring attack. But, immediately following that were the rabbit ears that came fluttering from the sky and Shia was shouting, "Stop~!", as she fell together with Doryukken.

Holding the sledgehammer which was further accelerated by outburst, she used the high-stance aimed at the Black Dragon's head.

*DOoGAaAAA!!!*

The impact was incomparable to any impact that had happened before. At the moment of impact, the ground burst and flew radially, accompanied by a thundering sound, it created a crater that looked like a result of a bombing. That was thanks to Doryukken's remodelling by Hajime. Gravity magic was granted to the compressed Azhantium that was the main material. However, it was not the one that "neutralized" like the ones in the unmanned reconnaissance planes, but the opposite where the ore could "increase its weight." The weight increased according to the amount of magic power supplied. The current Doryukken was just like *****ton Hammer!, just like the one inside the manga.

Furthermore, those who received the ultra-heavy blow wouldn't be able to escape from serious damage. That's right, if it was directly hit….

"Guruaaa!!"

Together with the Black Dragon's roar, a flame bullet approached Yue at tremendous speed from inside the dust that scattered by Doryukken. Yue immediately did an emergency evasion by "falling" to the right. However, the gravity ball magic was canceled instead.

The dust was cleared up as the after-effect of the previous flame bullet, and there was the Black Dragon who managed to evade Doryukken which sunk to the ground by a paper-thin margin. At the moment of impact, it seemed to somehow evade using the peculiar strength of a dragon. Having its restraints removed, the Black Dragon did one rotation in high-speed as if trying to dispel its grudge and its large mass of a tail hit Shia who was just pulling out Doryukken.

"Agh!!"

By a hair's breadth, Shia used Doryukken as a shield and jumped back to kill the impact, because she was greatly blown away at the same time, she disappeared into the trees.

The Black Dragon used the momentum from the rotation and recovered its posture, and its golden eyes were glaring at Hajime… … not, just passed towards Will behind him. Hajime immediately put the large shield back into "Treasure Box," then pulled out Donner-Schlag and fired them. Many roars resounded, accompanied by flashes that cut through the sky and attacked the Black Dragon. Without being able to evade, the Black Dragon received direct hits from the storm of destruction, blown away from its spot, and thrown into the river with a tremor, creating a magnificent sprays.

Because Hajime thought it'd be bad for Will to be in its line of fire, he charged at the Black Dragon. Using gunspin in mid-air to reload Donner-Schlag in his hands, he repeatedly fired in succession just like before. However, the Black Dragon got up accompanied with roar that scattered the river's water, somehow, it ignored Hajime and fired a flame bullet that was aimed at Will.

"Kh!"

Because it aimed at Willl, Hajime dared to approach it and tried to attack furiously to gain its attention. But, the Black Dragon acted as if it didn't even care if Hajime was there, continue to target Will.

"Yue!"

"Nh "Wave Castle"."

"Hih!", was the miserable scream that came from the cowering Will, and in front of him was high-density wall of water. The flame bullet was obstructed by the rampart-like wall of water created by Yue and disappeared. And, at that time, the students finally regained their senses from this raging development and began to chant their magic. They were trying to support the party. Quickly, fire bullets and wind blades rushed towards the Black Dragon as they created archs.

However….

"GOoAAA!!"

The impact from the dragon's roar dispersed the attacks. Moreover, having heard the tremendous roar and stared by the golden eyes, Will let out similar "Hih," scream as he backed away and fell on his butt, reaching the female students' spot.

Hajime, who completely judged her to be outside of the combat assets, shouted at Aiko to escape. Aiko was hesitating. Hajime was also Aiko's student after all, so to left him in front of this powerful demonic beast made her hesitate as a teacher.

At that time, the Black Dragon began to flap its wings and flew into the sky while blowing the surroundings river water away. In addition, it rapidly shot flame bullets at Will.

Although Hajime had fired the railguns in quick succession, he couldn't get its attention at all. The Black Dragon's scales, similar to scorpion-like thing that boasted its hardness in the past, was only slightly scratched even after receiving direct hits from the railguns.

The Black Dragon stubbornly targeted Will. It was as if it was being manipulated by something. It faithfully obeyed the order like a robot. It kept trying to kill Will even after being restrained by gravity before, it seemed to think nothing of those who tried to obstruct it.

Although Hajime didn't understand why it obstinately targeted Will, it was a convenient thing, since its target was already decided, so he gave out an instruction to Yue.

"Yue! Protect Will! I'll defeat this guy!"

"Nh, leave it to me!"

Hearing Hajime's instruction, Yue immediately "fell" towards Will, and stood in front of him. When she snuck a look at her back, irritation surfaced when she saw Aiko and the students who couldn't move well in this situation and she muttered in displeasure.

"… … If you don't want to die, hide behind me."

The students were trivials, but regarding Aiko, Hajime was at least concerned about her, so she let out those words to not let her die. Incidentally, she had already forgotten how Aiko became a hindrance to them.

The students moved closer to Yue without particularly reacting to Yue's cold words. They realized by Yue's side was the safest place, thanks to the rampart of ice that chantlessly constructed using the surrounding moisture.

Normally, they'd have the ability to fight some more. But, no matter even if they knew Hajime was alive, the day they were almost killed by the Behemoth and Traum Soldiers as well as how Hajime fell to his "death" into the abyss still traumatized their minds. They followed Aiko because even if they couldn't join the hero group in the dungeon, they couldn't just half ass things.Even so, their magic was ineffective against the Black Dragon, coupled with the roar filled with killing intent, made their heart completely withered. Their mental state was completely unsuited for combat.

Because Yue was there, Hajime was assured of Will's safety, and concentrated on attacking. The flying Black Dragon was concentrating on destroying Yue's defensive wall, as it targeting Will on the other side of the wall, even now. However, flame bullets were incapable of penetrating the wall, then it raised its head in an arch again as it realized it. It began to focus magic power inside its mouth.

"Hah, it's the first time I've been ignored this far… … that's why, I'll do anything to make you not ignoring me!"

As Hajime put back Donner into its holster, he took out Schlagen from the "Treasure Box." Immediately after he activated "Lightning-clad," the three meters weapon with an atrocious form let out bright red sparks. As expected, the Black Dragon realized Hajime's next move was a dangerous one, and it turned its mouth, aiming at Hajime. It was just like Hajime had predicted: it couldn't ignore him.

At the same time the Black Dragon fired the death spreading Breath, Hajime's Schlagen finished the loading and fired.

They let out the same extreme flash. They became a storm of death. Black and red aurora were clashing against each other. At the moment of collision, a terrific shock wave was generated and the surrounding trees were blown away. Just by power alone, they were probably equal. However, the two auroras clearly divided between the victor and the loser from their nature. Although the Breath continued to let out an excellent aurora, Schlagen was specialized in penetrating through a single point. Therefore, the Breath was inevitably broken through, and that power reached the Black Dragon.

The head of the Black Dragon which fired the Breath suddenly curved upward. The full-metal jacket made out of star ore penetrated the Breath and hit the dragon's opened mouth. However, the wound was far from a mortal one. With the bending of the Breath's trajectory and power, several of its sharp fangs evaporated and as it nearly passed through the side of its head, it stopped before one of its wings on its back was blown off.

"GURUaAAA!!"

The Black Dragon fell as it spun towards the ground and let out a pained scream. Hajime was fortunately able to evade the Breath using “Aerodynamic,” and while he was upside down in mid-air he used “Aerodynamic”‘s “Ground Shrinker.” As he dived at high-speed, he used “Grand Leg” to attack the Black Dragon’s abdomen.

*ZUDONh!* The lower abdomen let out a roaring sound from the impact, and the Black Dragon’s body folded. The ground was radially cracked by the impact. It couldn’t be said that the damage was considerable even though the Black Dragon let out a scream. Its armor was capable of enduring the Railguns after all. However, having assumed that, Hajime attacked further as he greatly held out the artificial left arm. *KIiIIII!!!* Machine-like sounds came from the artificial arm. The “Oscillation Smash” he used before fell down.

It was Hajime’s fist of destruction that was thrust in high speed and was capable of pulverizing a large boulder in a single blow, and it mercilessly attacked the Black Dragon’s abdomen.

*DOoGUuUU!!*

Along with the muffled sound, the scales on the abdomen were cracked. With the purpose of transmitting the impact, its insides received considerable damage from this attack, and the Black Dragon raised a pained voice again as it vomited large amounts of blood from its mouth. Maybe because it thought it’d be dangerous if this kept up, the Black Dragon poured its magic power in one of its wings and a windstorm appeared, then it tried to forcefully regain its posture. Once again, Hajime used “Aerodynamic” to evade. He didn’t forget to leave a parting gift.

At the moment the Black Dragon turned its golden eyes towards Hajime who escaped into the air, a big explosion occurred under its abdomen. The dragon’s gigantic figure flew two meters from the surface from the impact. Hajime’s parting gift was a “Grenade.”

“KUuWAaAA!!”

Receiving an impact at the same place as before, it couldn’t be helped that it was unable to raise a scream and only let out a muffled groan. With its head drooped to endure it, blood was flowing from the Black Dragon’s mouth. Somehow, its groan weakened.

Maybe because the Black Dragon recognized Hajime as a threat, it looked away from Will towards Hajime and rapid-fired flame bullets from its mouth. The flame bullets flew through the air as if they were anti-aircraft fire. However, none of the fire hit Hajime. Hajime was using “Aerodynamic” and “Ground Shrinker” simultaneously to freely run in the sky, leaving after-images, Hajime knocked down the Black Dragon using Hit & Away tactic.

He fired Donner-Schlag from medium range at nasty places such as the claws, gums, eyes, tail’s base, and butt. In the next moment, he drew closer and used the combo of “Oscillation Smash” from the shotshell outburst + “Grand Arm” to hit the head and flank.

“KURUu, GUWANN!”

Somewhat, no, the Black Dragon certainly began to give out a weeping voice. With its scales cracked all over the place, a large amount of blood dripped from its mouth.

“Incredible….”

Having watched Hajime’s fight, Tamai Atsushi spontaneously muttered that from the safety area behind Yue. Without having to say it, the other students and Aiko were silently agreeing as they nodded, and they were unable to look away from the overwhelming fight. As for Will, he intensely watched Hajime with sparkling eyes as if he didn’t remember he was trembling in front of the Black Dragon before.

By the way, unbeknownst to them Shia had returned and tried to enter combat, only to be stopped by Yue who had guessed Hajime’s intentions. Currently, she watched him together with Yue by her side. Having been blown away at the beginning, she actually felt somewhat depressed.

Hajime didn’t immediately pull out Schlagen, Orkan, and the others because he thought it was a good chance to show off his fighting prowess to Aiko and the students. Although the Black Dragon was certainly sturdy and the power of one of its attacks was to be feared, it’s easier to attack its huge body if one fought calmly, and its attacks were monotonous. So, it was possible for him to put into practice “no matter what, it won’t hit,” after all it was an opponent Hajime could go easy on. Because he’d separate from Aiko and the students, to put a hard-line so the Church and Kingdom wouldn’t be relaxed when the heroes received the information from Aiko, he thought of showing off his true power to them.

Because of that, although Hajime completely knocked down the pitiful Black Dragon, he held gratitude towards it in his mind. Even though there were cracks all over the place, none of the scales were completely crushed in the least. Truly significant durability. Because he remembered the scorpion-like thing, to be sure of it, he used “Mineral Appraisal” on the scales and because there was no reaction, it seemed it was a mineral that couldn’t be transmutated.

Slowly, because he thought it was enough to make them understand his true strength, it was about time for the finishing blow. He slipped onto the Black Dragon’s chest in an instant, and kicked with “Grand Leg” to roll him back towards its abdomen. Following that, he pulled out the Pile Bunker from the “Treasure Box” on the Black Dragon’s abdomen.

From the direction of Will and the others, he could hear a clamor but decided to ignore it. The anchors fired, and the arms fixed its location on the Black Dragon. Following that, he released “Lightning-clad.” The reason he chose the Pile Bunker was because he couldn’t pull out all of its power inside the Raisen Great Dungeon, so he wanted to do an actual combat test.

The stake which coated in Azanthium started to rotate intensely inside, and the Pile Bunker let out bright red sparks. If this kept up, the four ton stake would mercilessly end the Black Dragon’s life.

However, just like the proverb “a cornered rat will bite the cat,” a wounded beast was something one should be cautious of. It was the same as the Black Dragon.

“GUuGAaAAAA!!!”

Along with the Black Dragon's roar, a violent blast was generated towards all directions. It was an explosion made of pure magic power. In addition, using a moment to strengthen its body to the limit and the explosive power from its muscles, the anchors that pierced the ground to fix the Pile Bunker were raised and at the same time it pried open the arms with its muscles. Following that, it turned around in an instant to shake Hajime off.

"Uoh!?"

Hajime instinctively stepped back. The heavy Pile Bunker was, the Pile Bunker that was on the verge of firing was turned to target the sky, and the stake that was accelerated to its max launched into the sky. A straight line that made ones narrow their eyes ascended through the sky, and Hajime who put the Pile Bunker into the "Treasure Box" confirmed the Black Dragon used its last struggle to move towards Will.

"Tch, Shia!"
"Y-Yes"

As he clicked his tongue towards this blunder, Hajime called Shia. Shia, having realized his intentions, jumped towards the sky using the rampart of ice, and let out a yell so she wouldn't be blown away this time. With the free fall and the outburst from the shotshell, she fell towards the Black Dragon just like a meteor.

If it was the normal Black Dragon, it'd be able to avoid it, but the Black Dragon that was literally in its last struggle didn't have room for that, it was unable to avoid the hammer. Shia, who held the ultra-heavy Doryukken in a high-stance, further poured her magic power to explosively increase its weight. Subsequently, it directly hit the crown of the Black Dragon's head without missing an inch as it let out a thundering sound.

The Black Dragon's head sank to the ground, and its lower body floated as it stood on its hands because it was in the middle of a charge. After a moment of stillness, it finally fell down and made the earth tremor.

Shia, who pulled out Doryukken from the Black Dragon's head that was on the ground, was surprised by what she saw. It was something natural. Although the Black Dragon's head was smashed and considerably cracked, it wasn't completely broken. It was truly dreadful durability.

Hajime came towards the Black Dragon from behind. Also, the stake launched from the Pile Bunker pierced the ground between Hajime and the Black Dragon. Hajime knew the sprawled dragon wasn't dead by percepting its presence, next, he suddenly recalled the talk with Mottou about the Ryujin race from before. The one about "kicking a dragon's ass."

Hajime pulled out the stake that pierced the ground using "Grand Arm" and carried it on his shoulder as he positioned himself before the base of the Black Dragon's tail. Following that, he made a stance just like a javelin thrower. Naturally, in his hand was the Pile Bunker's stake.

Everyone there was able to guess what Hajime was going to do, and their cheeks convulsed. Even though the scales were troublesome, it shouldn't be a good thing to thrust it there(‥).

Even though Yue, Shia, and the others floated expressions of horror towards Hajime's mercilessness, Hajime only thought of that as blowing wind.

And finally, Hajime's Pile Bunker mightily pierced the Black Dragon's "bleep" and zuburi sound resounded. At that moment,

"Ah— — — nanojyaaaaa — — — !!!"

With its eyes immediately opened wide, the Black Dragon let out a heartbreaking scream as it woke up. In truth, having thrust half of the stake and using his fist to make it pierce further, as expected, even Hajime was surprised by the scream that obviously came from the Black Dragon, and he inadvertently removed his clasped fist.

"Ass is~, this one's ass is~"

Because of the Black Dragon's grieving, painful, and somewhat excited tone, everyone let out a "What the heck is this!?" in amazement as they stared at the Black Dragon while stunned.

Apparently, it didn't end as just a normal dragon subjugation.

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## Chapter 9 : Tio Clarce

*"I-it's pulling~, it's pulling out this one's ass~"*

On the mountain side of the northern mountain range, where trees were mowed down and the dried up river was in ruins, a truly miserable voice rang out. It was a woman's voice. A voice that was not spoken, but rang out just like a wide area version of telepathy. Because a dragon's vocal chords and mouth were incapable of speaking human words, it definitely used a method to transmit words through air vibrations.

However, it was impossible for demonic beasts to speak in human words in the first place. Currently, the only confirmed case was the human-faced fish from somewhere. Even among the general population, there shouldn't be an existence such as a demonic beast capable of understanding human language. Furthermore, the existence of the Black Dragon right before their eyes was strange in and of itself. It was the first thing to ever endure so many shots of Hajime's railguns excluding the ones in Great Dungeons. Moreover, although there were powerful demonic beasts that could fire such Breath, they shouldn't exist around this place. If they lived here, then the danger should already be widely known.

Therefore, he deduced two possibilities as to why it's here. First: it was possible this Black Dragon came from further than the fifth mountain range, a completely unknown demonic beast. Following that, the other one was….

“You… … don’t tell me, are you from the Ryuujin race?”

*“Mu? Indeed. This one came from the prideful Ryuujin race. Isn’t that great? Isn’t that amazing? That’s why, although this one wants to pull it out of this one’s ass… … this one’s magic power is about to be cut off. If this one returns to original form in this situation… … it’ll be awful… … this one’s ass will.”*

Hajime thought it couldn’t be possible, but the Black Dragon replied, saying he was correct. Hajime was surprised in the “edge” of his mind. Just how many times since he coming to this world did he meet “rare existences.” Yue was from the Vampire race that should have been annihilated in the wars 300 years ago. Shia was the current generation’s atavism, and right before his eyes was the Black Dragon who came from the Ryuujin race, which was believed to have been annihilated more than 500 years ago.

“… … Why are you in this place?”

While Hajime was still surprised, Yue continued to ask the Black Dragon. The Ryuujin race was a legend even for Yue. She was interested in whether or not it was the only living one of its race, just like her. The light of curiosity dwelled in her eyes.

*“Well, more importantly, the ass… … the amount of magic power remaining is about… … eh, ah, please stop! Poking it is not good! The stimulation—! The stimulation—~!”*

Because the Black Dragon ignored Yue’s question, speaking with a delinquent-like attitude, Hajime said, “You dare to ignore Yue’s question, Aa?,” while using his fist to drive in the stake sprouting from the Black Dragon’s butt. With the shock directly spreading inside its body, the Black Dragon let out a scream as it writhed. Its dignified appearance as if it was a death god when they first met was just like an illusion because not even a bit of that remained.

“Just why would the should be perished Ryuujin race be here, attacking mere adventurers… … I also want to hear about that. Normally, I’d just pierce your ass as is, but I’ll delay that to hear your story. Well then, tell me briefly.”

Hajime thought the actions of this legendary Ryuujin race were too unnatural. Normally he’d be merciless, but he slightly delayed that as he urged it to speak. And he continued to grind the stake with his hand.

*“Ah, kuh, stop grinding it~ nanojya~. I-I’ll tell you!”*

Hajime’s action astonished the surrounding others, but Hajime didn’t mind them. Because it couldn’t talk if he kept it up, Hajime stopped the grinding. However, his hand was still affixed to the stake. The Black Dragon was relieved when the grinding stopped as it let out a sigh. Following that, it began to talk about its circumstances in a somewhat hurried tone. The captivated tone must be just their imagination.

*“This one was being manipulated by someone. This one didn’t have any intention to attack thou. The temporary master ordered this one to find the young man over there and his companion and kill them.”*

The Black Dragon turned its gaze towards Will. Will was twitching for a moment and his body trembled, then he firmly returned the Black Dragon's gaze. Having seen Hajime's fight, he must have settled something.

"What do you mean?"

*"Umu, this one will talk in order. This one…."*

When the Black Dragon's talk was summarized, it became something like this.

It seemed this Black Dragon went out of the Ryuujin race's hidden town for a certain purpose. Its purpose was to investigate the visitors from another world. Although the details were omitted, there was a person with high magic perception inside the Ryuujin race, and it seemed that person perceived a huge magic discharge and some things arrived to this world several months ago.

Although the Ryuujin race had a law which prevented from involving themselves on the surface stage, but just as expected, to leave the the matter of unknown visitors as an unknown was something that'd be dangerous, even for them. After some discussion, they decided to start the investigation.

The Black Dragon before them left the hidden town with the purpose of investigation. Normally, it'd turn into human form after passing the mountain range, then it'd work hard in secretly gathering information, but it thought to rest a little before that, and it seemed to have taken a rest in the vicinity of first and second mountain range. Naturally, it used the Ryuujin race's peculiar magic; "Dragon Form" and turned into the Black Dragon because there were demonic beasts in the surroundings.

And then a man completely covered in black robe from head to toe appeared in front of the sleeping Black Dragon. That man gradually gnawed on the thoughts and mind of the sleeping Black Dragon using the using a variety of brainwashing and suggestion magic from the dark magic system.

Naturally, if that happened it'd usually counterattack. But the Ryuujin race had a bad habit. That's right, it was the one that became the origin of that proverb. Ryuujin race that entered deep sleep in dragon form wouldn't be easily awaken. However, it was as long as no one kicked its ass. Even so, Ryuujin race boasted the toughness of their willpower, so it shouldn't be easy to manipulate it.

Then, for how it was able to be perfectly manipulated. That was….

*"That man is frightening. His aptitude in dark magic can be called the level of a genius. That man continuously used magic for one full day. So no matter how strong this one is, this one couldn't endured it after all…."*

*It's the greatest mistake of this one's life!*, was the feeling that came from the Black Dragon's sorrowful voice. However, Hajime just tsukkomi'ed that with cold eyes.

"In other words, having come here to investigate, how can you not notice magic being used for a full day, just because you're fast asleep?"

Everyone's eyes look somewhat foolish. The Black Dragon turned its gaze towards the day after tomorrow, and it continued its story as if nothing happened. By the way, the reason it knew it took a full day was because it was still conscious even after the completion of brainwashing, and heard the culprit grumbling, "For it to take one full day….".

Afterwards, obeying the robed man, it helped brainwash the demonic beasts in the second mountain range. Then, on a certain day, the Brutal army was moved to the first mountain range, and they encountered Will's party who were undertaking the investigation request. Having received the order to kill any witnesses, it chased after them. This one alone reported to the robed man. For some reason, it seemed it'd be bad if the fact he had brainwashed a lot of demonic beasts was revealed, so he ordered the Black Dragon to do a complete search.

Then, by the time it'd noticed it, it was already knocked down by Hajime, and panicked because she'd be dead if this kept up. That's why it exploded its magic power.

Following that, at the time it was going to do suicide attack according to instructions ingrained in its brainwashed brain. Its consciousness was blown away after Shia's attack. In the next moment, its mind immediately woke up from an indescribable stimulation and impact to its ass. It didn't know whether it was the blow to its head or its ass that made it regain its senses.

"… … Stop playing around."

Towards the Black Dragon who finished its story came a shaking voice that was desperately trying to suppress its fury. Everyone turned their glances towards that person. With his fists clenched, Will's aimed his anger filled eyes towards the Black Dragon.

"… … Just because you were manipulated… … Gale-san was—, Navarre-san was—, Lento-san was—, Waslee-san was—, Kurt-san was—! Killed but that couldn't be helped you say!"

Apparently, he was angry because he understood why the adventurers were killed. He raised a voice filled with fury towards the Black Dragon.

*"… …"*

The confronted Black Dragon didn't raise any rebuttal. It just received all of Will's words with calm eyes as it gazed at him. He was unable to stomach that attitude.

"In the first place, your story can't be proven to be true! You most likely made it up because you didn't want to die!"

*"… … What was spoken just now is the truth. For the Ryuujin race's pride doesn't allow this one to lie."*

Now, Will tried to argued vehemently. But, Yue intervened.

"… … Surely, it didn't lie."
"Kh, what's your basis for saying that…."

Having glanced at the snapped Will, Yue began to talk as she looked at the Black Dragon.

"… … The Ryuujin race is noble and honest. I've lived much longer from everyone here. That's why I am more familiar with the legend of the Ryuujin race. This one said "For its pride." That's why, it is surely not a lie. Furthermore… … I know if someone has the eyes of a liar."

Yue slightly moved her gaze away from the Black Dragon as she looked at the distance sky. Surely, she was reminded of the event 300 years ago. For the aloof princess, her surroundings had set her up and remembering the result, surely there were a lot of lies involved. Even the most familiar person to her could be called "liars." The result of her constantly looking away from that fact was the "betrayal." Therefore, for Yue, who had experienced the bitterness called the "study of life," her eyes were sensitive to "liars." Although the reason she entrusted herself when she first met Hajime was because there was no other way, and although Hajime never lied to her, when she was reminded of that time, her sensitivity to liars might have been the biggest contributing factor after all.

*"Fumu, for someone to still know of the Ryuujin race's ideals… … No, didn't thou say a long time ago?"*

For someone to still know the ideals of the existence called the Ryuujin race, the Black Dragon's tone was somewhat joyous.

"… …Nn. I am a survivor of the Vampire race. 300 years ago, I was heard the Ryuujin race was the ideal example of nobility."

*"Wow, Vampire race's… … Moreover 300 years ago… … Indeed, although this one heard they were dead, thou are the Vampire princess. Surely thy name is…."*

Apparently, the Black Dragon was alive for more or less the same amount of time as Yue. Moreover, its words implied that it knew of what had happened in the world. Even now, they might still hide their identities and are investigating the world. But, the Black Dragon seemed surprised that the Vampire Princess had survived. The surrounding, Will, Aiko, and the students were also looked at Yue with eyes of astonishment.

"Yue… … that's my name. It's the name I got from my most important person. So, I'd like you to call me that."

Yue gestured as though she were embracing something closely with both hands as her cheecks blushed faintly. For Yue, the Ryuujin race was an existence that should be taken as an example. So, the edge of her spoken words were filled with respect. That feeling must also have been involved in how she stopped Will's disparagement.

In Yue's surroundings, an aura of happiness somehow drifted around. Because of the abrupt love talk, the female students wore expressions as though they had eaten something sweet, while the male students were blushing because of Yue's charm as they looked at her. Even Will seemed to have lost some of his vigor.

However, he continued to speak because he still regretted what had happened to the senior adventurers.

"… … Even so, that doesn't change the fact that it killed them,… … but even I don't know what should be done… … Even so—! Gale-san was going to propose when this job ended… … their regrets…"

He knew in his head that the Black Dragon's words weren't a lie. However, he couldn't help but blame it. His heart just couldn't accept it. Inside Hajime's mind, "Once again, a splendid flag was raised huh," with weird admiration. Then he recalled the locket pendant they had picked up on the way.

"Will, is this that Gale's belonging?"

As he said that, he threw the locket pendant to Will. Will received it, he looked at it then he smiled as if he was truly happy.

"This, this is my locket pendant! I thought I had lost it, but you picked it up. Thank you very much!"

"Huh? It's yours?"

"Yes, it's not a mistake because there's mama's photograph!"

"Ma-Mama?"

His expectation came off splendidly, and the answer even made Hajime's cheeks cramp inadvertently.

Because the woman in the photograph should be in the first half of her twenties, he was doubtful but he heard, "After all, the photograph of mama in her youth is the best." as Will answered as if it was some kind of divine revelation. Everyone there realized, "Aa, mama-con huh," as they wore subtle expressions. The females looked more and more subtle….

By the way, Gale's other party seemed to be a "man." Following that, Gale's fullname was Gale Homoluca. It was just as the say that the name influenced the body.

Maybe because he regained his mother's photograph, Will considerably calmed down. It's effectiveness was truly an unknown. But, even if he was calmed down, his grudge and pain didn't disappear. Will, calmly, insisted to kill the Black Dragon. Moreover, even though it said it was brainwashed, he reasoned that it was completely faking it. His main reason should be revenge.

Then, as if to repent, the Black Dragon spun its words that contained guilt in its voice.

*"Even if this one was manipulated, it is true that this one is guilty for plucking the precious life of people. To make up for it, this one will obediently received the judgement. However, this one want you to delayed that for a while. At the very least, until that dangerous man is stopped.That man is trying to make an army of demonic beasts. Although Ryuujin race's law doesn't allow any interference against the continent's fate, this one was responsible. This one can't just leave it… … This one know it is just this one's selfishness. But, please somehow overlook that."*

Hearing the Black Dragon words, everyone in that place were surprised when they heard about the army of demonic beasts. Naturally, everyone's gazes focused on Hajime. These members were naturally looked at their leader. Actually, because Hajime was the one who stopped piercing the Black Dragon, they naturally entrusted the decision to him.

Hajime's answer was,

"Well, I don't really know about your circumstance. But, it'll be a troublesome so I'll ignore it. Die as an apology."

He swung the fist of his artificial arm as he said that.

*"Wait—! Th-Thou, with the flow of the talk, thou shouldn't have done the finishing blow as if no discussion is necessary! Please! This one will apologize without fail! This one don't mind whatever thou do when that matter is over! That's why delay it for now! The afterlife will—!"*

Hajime continue to swung his fist as he ignored the Black Dragon's words with cold eyes. However, he couldn't finished that. At the moment he swung it, Yue clung on to Hajime's neck. Surprising him, Yue whispered to Hajime's ears as she instinctively held him.

"… … Are you going to kill?"

"Eh? Well, we were trying to kill each other…."

"… … But, it's not an enemy. Killing intent and malice were never turned towards us. It was deprived of it's will."

Apparently, Yue didn't wanted the Black Dragon to die. For Yue, Ryuujin race was something she yearned for, so she respected it.

Moreover, even though he said they were trying to kill each other, from the beginning, the Black Dragon never turned its killing intent and malice towards Hajime and the others. They understood the reason now. With it's will literally deprived, it only did as ordered just like a machine. Even so, there was no change with how they tried to kill each other. However, in the first place, Will was the only one in the Black Dragon's eyes, and the reason it battled Hajime was because the Black Dragon confronted Hajime's intent to kill.

Further saying, Hajime would be inconvenienced if Will was dead, so certainly it was an enemy because it aimed at Will, but the one behind the Black Dragon was the robed man. Then, if he were to talk about who the enemy was, it'd be more likely to be that man.

Also, there was a reason for her to stop him.

Yue knew Hajime's stance. But, in Yue's eyes, "enemy" that should be killed and the Black Dragon weren't the same thing. Because she was the ruler of the Vampire race, having experienced such things, her eyes wouldn't be mistaken about a person. In Yue's eyes, there were no essence of "enemy" inside the Black Dragon's mind. For Yue, she at least didn't want Hajime to kill things other than the "enemy,"

After all,

"… … If one compromised on the important rule imposed to themselves, one would be broken. Wouldn't your rule changed if you kill the Black Dragon?"

She was worried that Hajime would be "broken" if he killed things beside the "enemy."

Having received Yue's words, Hajime could guess her mind, and he thought more and more carefully if the Black Dragon was the "enemy" as he slightly inclined his neck. Even if it was manipulated, Hajime was not so naive to considered that in a fight to death. He would have most likely killed it without mercy.

However, after it regained its mind and the brainwashing was dissolved, to purposely execute it with "enemies will be killed," he thought, *isn't that a deviation?*

As she clung on Hajime's neck, Yue was watching him closely and looked like they'd kiss at any moment, and having thought of that, unexpectedly, it spoke with a quiet desperate tone.

*"This one is sorry to intrude on such good atmosphere, but even if thou feel lost, at the very least could thou pull out the stake from this one's ass? If this keep up, this one will be dead no matter what will happened."*

"Nn? What do you mean?"

*"Having received the external thing while in dragon form, at the time this one returned to original form, it'd influence the body as is. Try imagining it. The scene of this stake piercing a woman's ass… … Do you think this one will survive that?"*

Everyone in the area imagined the scene that the Black Dragon said, then "Uwa~," their expressions cramped. Especially the females, they hold their butts as they turned pale.

*"Well, although the dragon form could be maintained using magic power, this one's magic power almost exhausted. In a minute… … although it isn't bad to go to a new world, please pardon this one from that kind of death. The afterlife without it unplugged—"*

Somewhat, its words seemed anxious, and its tone weakened as if its limit was truly close, and apparently Hajime didn't have more time to think.

Hajime embraced Yue with his right arm, and decided rather than hesitating, he'd go along with his partner words as is. For people, they wouldn't be able to understand their own selves. That's why, it wouldn't be a mistake to choose the direction where his trusted partner wouldn't feel uneasy.

Having thought that, Hajime carefully put his hand on the stake which was stucked in the Black Dragon's ass. Following that, he used his strength to pull it out.

*"Haaan! P-Please do it slowly. This one still inex- afuuun. Yah, how intense! If this— Aanh! Comingg, something is coming~"*

Because it stuck hard inside, he twisted it for so many times, and he put considerable power while twisting it to pull it out, but somehow the Black Dragon began to let out a captivated voice as it panted. Hajime ignored that voice and pulled it out without any mercy.

*ZUBOh!!*

*"Ahiii— — —!! A-amazing… … Even though this one said to do it gently, to be treated without any mercy… … This is the first time…."*

As the Black Dragon muttered unknown things, immediately, its body completely wrapped with cocoon-like, jet-black magic power, and its big size began to decreased. Following that, after it reached the size of a human, the magic power immediately disappeared.

In the place of the black-colored magic power was something collapsed on its feet, and while using one hand to support its body, the other hand was holding its butt. With blushing cheeks, it was a black-haired, golden-eyed beautiful girl. Her glossy, straight, black hair reached her waist and her cheeks dyed bright red, Haa haa, she breathed roughly as if she was in a trance.

Her appearance was in the first half of her twenties, and her height might be around 170 cm. With a splendid proportion one could be proud of. Every time she breathed, a pair of hills were intensely shook as they peeped from inside the clothes' collar that became disordered as it hanged on her, and it looked like they'd came out at any moment. If Shia was melon, the Black Dragon was watermelon….

The Black Dragon's real form was a captivating beauty and the males were especially reacted grandly to that. The three male students in adolescent were somewhat slouching. If this keeps up they'd likely go on all fours. The female students were looking at them with eyes as if they were no different from cockroaches.

"Haa haa, umuu, this one still alive… … Although there is still a sense of discomfort on the ass… … this one's whole body is hurting in all places… … Haa haa… … for pain to be this sweet…."

The Black Dragon wore a dangerous expression and let out a dangerous words for some reason, then she pulled herself together as she immediately straightened her sitting position and began to introduce herself in such cold atmosphere. Still, she sometimes panted, *haa haa*, and messed various things, but….

"This one have troubled thou. With all of this one's might, this one apologize. This one's name is Tio Clarce. A person that came from the last tribe of Ryuujin race, Clarce tribe."

The Black Dragon introduced herself as Tio Clarce, next, she talked on how the black robed man was going to attack the town with an army of brainwashed demonic beasts. Their number had reached around 3,000 to 4,000. Also, from the second mountain range, the leaders of groups of demonic beasts were already brainwashed, so he could use the groups more efficiently as his subordinates.

When she said about controlling demonic beasts, it reminded Hajime and the others about the new power of the one called Demon Race in this world. Maybe because Aiko and the students also thought of that, they guessed the black robed man was actually from Demon race.

However, their guess was easily refuted by Tio. After all, the black robed man was black-haired, black-eyed human, and still at the age of a boy. Moreover, from the mouth of the

Black Dragon called Tio, who was made as a subordinate to him came the settling words, “That person introduced himself as a hero,” with a tone filled with considerably grudge against the so called hero.

A black-haired, black-eyed human boy, moreover he was someone with genius-like talent on dark magic. With this much hints, a certain person came to their minds. Aiko and the students muttered, “That, can’t be…,” at the same time as they showed mixed and complexed expressions. *Though it didn’t limited to pure black*, they said as they didn’t wanted to believed it.

And, Hajime suddenly leaked a mutter, “Ooh, this is…,” as he looked at the distance. If ones asked, having heard Tio’s story, he seemed to have looked for the groups of demonic beasts and the black robed man using the unmanned probes.

Following that, the unmanned probes finally discovered a certain place where the demonic beasts army was. They numbered….

“That’s, not at the level of 3,000 to 4,000, you know? It’s at the level which one more digit should be added.”

Everyone opened their eyes wide after they heard Hajime’s report. Moreover, the army had started their march. The direction was surely towards Ul town. As they were, they’d came out of the mountain in a half day, and they’d likely reached the town in a day.

“W-We must quickly inform the town—! Tell them to take shelter, called the rescue from Imperial capital,… … then, then….”

Because it was a serious situation, Aiko desperately tried to arranged her words in confusion. No matter if the enemies were tens of thousand demonic beasts, even with their cheat-like specs, the students carried a trauma. Aiko didn’t have any combat experience, while Will, who inspired to be an adventurer, and Tio who exhausted her magic power wouldn’t even became an obstacle for the enemies. That’s why, just as Aiko had said, they must quickly inform the town of the emergency, then it’d be the best to run away until the rescue from the Imperial capital came.

And, among everyone who was shaken, Will suddenly muttered.

“Umm, if it’s Hajime-dono something can be….”

With those words, everyone looked at Hajime. Their eyes were dyed in expectation of the possibility. Having stared at like that, Hajime shook her hand gloomily, and replied with a feeling of abandonment.

“Don’t look at me with such eyes. My work is only to take Will back to Fhuren. As if I will take the object of protection into a war. That’s why you should stop that and immediately return to the town to report.”

The students and Will could feel the antipathy from Hajime’s unmotivated attitude. Among them, Aiko asked a question with an expression as if she remembered something.

“Nagumo-kun, did you find the black robed man?”

“Nn? Well, although I am checking the groups since a while ago, I didn’t see any human’s shadow.”

Having heard Hajime’s words, Aiko looked down again. Following that, *potsuri*, she said she wanted to remained here to confirmed if the black robed man was Shimizu Yukitoshi who currently missing or not. It was because Aiko always thought of her student. She’d likely unable to do anything if the current situation was caused by her own student, after all.

However, they couldn’t leave Aiko at the place where several ten thousands of demonic beast were, so Sonobe and the students desperately tried to persuade Aiko. But, Aiko still hesitated. Among them, *then how if Nagumo also goes*… … they began to think like that. Already, Hajime thought the talk about returning and not returning as they stopped in this place as a hassle, so he turned a cold look towards Aiko.

“Remain here if you want. We are going to take Will along to the town.”

As he said that, he gripped Will’s collar and dragged him as he began to descended the mountain. Will, Aiko, and the students tried to object in a panic. Their reason, they couldn’t leave the army of demonic beasts as is, they wanted to confirmed who the black robed man was, and the army could be defeated by Hajime….

Hajime let out a sigh and looked back Aiko and the others with somewhat irritated look.

“Didn’t I already said it, my job is to protect Will. Taking along the protection target into battle against that army is something I won’t do.. For example, even if I have to do it, the obstacle would be too big and it’d be a battle of annihilation for me alone. By no means would I want to suffer like that. Furthermore, if you go to confirm the black robed man’s identity, then who will report this matter to the town? If by chance we are annihilated, the town will be devoured by a surprise attack, you know? By the way, the magic-driven two-wheeler can only be moved by me, so it’d be impossible for the others to return earlier if I fight, kay?”

Having heard the logical counter to their demands, Aiko and the others were speechless as he pointed how futile their demands were.

“Well, just as Mas—… … Kohonh, just as he said. Because this one has exhausted her magic power, this one can do nothing. So, the top priority is to inform the town about the emergency. If this one rests for one day, this one will recover considerably.”

Because everyone kept silent, Tio spoke to back him up. Just a little, she called Hajime in a strange way… … but it must have been their imagination. Aiko also knew that it’d be the best to temporary stopped worrying about Shimizu, and she decided to give priority to secure the safety of the students by her side.

Tio was unable to moved due to magic power exhaustion, so Hajime dragged her by her neck root. Actually, the male students said someone should carried Tio on their backs as they grandly scattered sparks among themselves, but that was rejected by the female students. And because Tio herself have wished it, she was somehow carried by Hajime.

However, rather than on his back, it was Hajime's characteristic to not hold her. As he frowned because it was a hassle, he suddenly gripped Tio's foot and began to dragged her.

Because of the protests from Aiko and the others, he reluctantly changed it to gripping her neck root, and dragged her just like before. No matter what Hajime did, it resulted in Tio, who somehow floated an ecstatic expression that made the surroundings shuddered, and they descended the mountain as is.

The party, with dark cloud and an army behind them, rushed to return to the Ul town.

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## Chapter 10 : Sensei's Talk

The magic-driven four-wheeler dashed out at faster speed than when they'd departed, but the land-leveling function couldn't keep up, so Tio, who was crucified on the ceiling, received the impact. The male students in the carrier received a mixer-like shaking.

Then, at that time, he discovered the fully-armed bodyguard Knights who fiercely drove their horses in the area between the town of Ul and northern mountain range. Hajime's "Farsight" could see David in the lead wearing an oni-like expression while Chase who was beside him couldn't hide his frustration as they swiftly rode.

Having ran for a while, they discovered a black object that created a clamor as it moved. It was natural for them to think what they saw was a demonic beast. With their weapons drawn, they changed their formation. Their response speed was fast, and indeed, it was clear how they were praised as the VIP's bodyguards.

In particular, even if he was going to be attacked, Hajime didn't have any problem to just charge past them, but Aiko didn't know that because she thought it'd be a serious matter if Tio, who raised a bewitching and charming scream, and the pale male students were exposed to such attacks. She showed her face through the sunroof and desperately waved her hands as she shouted at David to notice her.

As they drew near, David tried to invoke his magic. He narrowed his eyes as he could see a human-like figure suddenly spring up above the black object that came in high speed. Normally, he'd do a preemptive strike as there was nothing to argue about, but something inside him told him to stop. It could be said that it was his sixth sense exclusive to Aiko, the so-called high-sensitivity Aiko sensor.

With his hand held out, he sent his subordinates the signal to stop their attacks. Although the subordinates were suspicious about it, they became wide-eyed as they heard the familiar voice from the human-like thing that grew out of the top of the black object as it approached them. David had already displayed an expression as if he couldn't believe it and muttered, "Aiko?"

For a moment, *don't tell me Aiko's lower half was eaten by that demonic beast!?*, as David and the others became pale, but Aiko waved her hands energetically and said, "David-sa~n, it's me! Please don't attack us~!", with a voice full of life.

They understood that they had misunderstood the situation, and they let out joyful expressions at this reunion because the one on the black object was undoubtedly the person they held dear. As if he was drunk on the situation, David greatly spread his arms with an expression that said "Come! Jump into my arms!" Chase and the others at his sides also spread their arms as if saying, "Jump to me—!"

Seeing the Knights' appearances with their hands spread, Hajime looked displeased. Although Aiko and the students thought Hajime would obviously stop before David and the Knights… Hajime suddenly poured more magic power, and they accelerated.

Because they were at a distance where deceleration was absolutely necessary, the Knights became stupefied when the black object accelerated further, and moved away in panic.

Hajime's magic-driven four-wheeler just passed David and the Knights who spread their hands in smiles. Aiko could only shout, "Why?," that became smaller because of the Doppler effect, while David and the Knights just hardened and smiled as is. After that, in the next moment they screamed, "Aikoo~!," just like those separated from their lovers, and began to fiercely run after the four-wheeler.

"Nagumo-kun! Why, why did you do such a dangerous thing!?"

Aiko became angry, getting back into the vehicle and fiercely protested against Hajime.

"There's no reason to stop, Sensei. If we stop, they'd likely ask about the situation. Do we have such time? We'll explain the situation in town after all, so there's no need to do it twice, right?"

"Uh, th-that's true…"

She was somewhat convinced, the things about them slipping out without permission and Hajime's four-wheeler would certainly take too much time, so Aiko shut her mouth. Yue, who got back into her seat, drew her face to Hajime's ear and asked him.

"… Real intention?"
"Those smiling Knights made me feel unpleasant."
"… Nn, same here."

By the way, right behind the Aiko poking her face out of the sunroof, was Tio tied up on the vehicle. An expression of ecstasy floated across her face because her damaged body continued to be stimulated by the vibration of vehicle's frame, but it seemed the Knights and Aiko didn't see her.

In addition, when they arrived at the town, Yue who knew of Tio's disgraceful behavior said "… is this, the Ryuujin race?," as she raised a slightly shocked expression. Since the first time Tio released her Dragon Form at the Northern Mountain range, she was in a subtle

mental state and seemed to “feel” the pain, that’s why Yue finally broke free from her illusion-like respect and yearning towards the Ryuujin race.

* * *

Arriving at the town of Ul, Hajime and his party calmly walked, while Aiko and the others were running towards the town headman’s place. Hajime thought of parting with Aiko and the students here and quickly taking Will back to Fhuren, but he reluctantly followed them because Will had started running before Aiko and the students.

The town was full of liveliness. The dishes came in wide varieties and abundantly, and the town was near a lake. It was the location where people and nature gathered. No one would ever dream that this town would be trampled by an army of demonic beasts in a day. Hajime and his party were looking at such a town, remembering they didn’t have any meals since yesterday, so they advanced towards the town hall as they enjoyed skewers from a stall.

Hajime and his party finally arrived at the town hall, and the place was already in a commotion. The branch head of Ul’s town guild, town executives, and the priests from the church were gathered and in a state of uproar. All of their expressions showed they couldn’t believe and didn’t want to believe the information brought by Aiko, the students, and Will as they closely questioned them.

Normally, they’d just put it off as nonsense from a madman if they heard tomorrow the town would be annihilated, but they were words that came from Aiko the “God’s Apostle,” and also known as the “Goddess of Good Harvest.” That was followed by the recent fact that the Demon race was capable of manipulating demonic beasts, so they couldn’t just ignore this information.

By the way, from the discussion inside the vehicle, Aiko and the students had agreed to hide Tio’s true form and there was a possibility of Shimizu Yukitoshi being the mastermind behind this. It’s undesirable for the Ryuujin race’s existence to be exposed, so Tio asked them to stay silent about this, and the mastermind’s identity was just a possibility, so Aiko didn’t want to carelessly convey it.

Aiko somehow or another agreed to conceal the information about the existence of the Ryuujin race because the race is something half-taboo for the Church of Saints, and it’d only cause chaos followed by the formation of a subjugation unit.

Within such commotion, Hajime came towards Will. He only thought of the surrounding chaos as blowing wind.

“Oi, Will. Don’t just run all of a sudden. Remember that you’re under my protection. If you’re done reporting, let’s quickly go back to Fhuren.”

With Hajime’s words, Will, Aiko and the others were surprised as they looked at Hajime. The others, the town leaders seemed to feel displeased as they looked at Hajime interrupting the emergency discussion, as if saying “Who the hell is this?”

“Wh-What are you saying? Hajime-dono. It’s a time of emergency now, right? Don’t tell me, you’re going to desert the town…”

Will started arguing with Hajime with an expression as if he couldn't believe what he'd just said, and Hajime replied with an expression as if he expected this hassle.

"Deserting or whatever it is, in the end, aren't you also going to abandon the town, take shelter, and wait for rescue to come? I'm already aware of this town's defenses from sightseeing… if you want to take shelter, it'd be okay to go to Fhuren. For a while now you've only talked about quickly evacuating the people."

"Th-That's… right… but, I can't just run away by myself in such a serious situation! Even I should have something I can help with. Even Hajime-dono…"

"Hajime-dono, please cooperate too," was the continuation of Will's words, but his words were interrupted as he was frozen by Hajime's cold eyes.

"… Do I need to speak more clearly to make you understand? My job is to take you back to Fhuren. I don't have anything to do with this town. Listen, I won't hear your opinion. If you still don't want to go… I'll just crush your limbs and drag you back."

"Wh—, th-that's…"

From Hajime's atmosphere, Will guessed those words were serious as he turned pale. His expression said he couldn't believe it. Hajime, who could overwhelm the dragon that easily annihilated veteran adventurers like Gale's party, looked a little like a hero to Will. That's why even if he was merciless, Will unconditionally believed Hajime would somehow help the townspeople under such an emergency. That's why Will felt betrayed by the cold words thrown out by Hajime..

As he was at a loss for words, Will unconsciously distanced himself from Hajime, but Hajime decided to approach him. Because of such a strange atmosphere, the surrounding people could only alternate looks between Hajime and Will without moving. Then someone suddenly moved and blocked Hajime.

It was Aiko. She immediately looked up straight at Hajime with a resolute expression.

"Nagumo-kun. If it's you… can't you do something about the army of demonic beasts? No… you can do it, right?"

Aiko's voice carried conviction, *he can do something if it's Hajime*. In other words, she declared he would be able to save the town. With those words, the surrounding town leaders started to make noise.

If they were to believe the reported threat from Aiko and the others, the enemies were tens of thousands of demonic beasts. Furthermore, they gathered from several mountain range areas. That meant it was on the scale of a war. Consequently, an individual wouldn't be able to influence the war. That's common sense. To overturn such common sense, there was a special existence even among the ones summoned from another world, that's a Hero. But, it didn't really mean he could win alone against an army. What it meant was leading the human race and together with his companions, simply using quantity. That's why they couldn't believe the boy in front of them who wasn't even a Hero could do something, even if those words came from Aiko. Even if they were words from the "Goddess of Good Harvest"

Towards Aiko's powerful gaze, Hajime waved his hands gloomily as he tried to deceive her by denying it.

"No no, Sensei. Isn't that impossible? Aren't there more than 40,000 of them? It'll be very, very—…"
"But, at that time in the mountain, you didn't say it was "impossible" when Will-san asked if Nagumo-kun could do something about it. Also, didn't you say "the obstacle would be too big and it'd become a fight till the last one standing for me alone"? To put it plainly, there's a possibility it'd become a fight till the last one standing, right? Did I hear it wrong?"

"… What good memory"

Because of Aiko's good memory, Hajime's face distorted as he awkwardly said that. He didn't regret what he'd said. Aiko requested with a more serious expression to Hajime who averted his face.

"Nagumo-kun. Can't you somehow lend us your power? If this keeps up, not only will this beautiful town be destroyed, a lot of lives will surely be lost."

"… How unexpected. I thought you held students as your top priority. Even all the things you've done were inevitably because there's the possibility it'd be able to return you even a bit earlier, right? Nevertheless, for the sake of unfamiliar people, you are trying to send a student to his death? You don't have the intention, but it's as though you're just like those guys from the church who tried to spur us to war, you know?"

Hajime's words were full of ridicule, but Aiko was still the same. Her expression was not the worried expression from just a minute ago, it was a resolute and "teacher"-like expression. There were priests from the church who listened to Hajime and Aiko's conversation nearby. They frowned and watched him with narrowed eyes because Hajime's words were full of disdain towards the church. That's why Aiko didn't move from her spot as she straightened her gaze and posture.

"… If there's a method to return to our original world, I'd quickly return the students, and my feelings haven't changed even now. But, if that's impossible… then, we are living in this world now, the words we exchanged and the people who smiled at us, at the very least I don't want to abandon the people within my reach. Thinking like this is natural as a human. Of course because sensei is a teacher, my priority will not change even under such an emergency…"

Aiko spun her words of confirmation one by one.

"Nagumo-kun, you're calm even now, that's why I think you've experienced something beyond our imagination, to become like this. That's why I feel that you have the composure to think about other people. The words of a teacher who couldn't be by your side when you were most hurt… might be too light for you. But, please hear me out, somehow."

Hajime kept quiet as is, and he returned Aiko's gaze, urging her to continue.

"Nagumo-kun. Last night, didn't you say you'll absolutely return to Japan? Then, Nagumo-kun. Are you going to return to Japan with everyone important to you except the ones who

obstruct you? Are you going to leave everyone who becomes a hindrance to you? Will you be able to live like that in Japan? When you return to Japan, will you change your way of life? The reason sensei didn't want the students to actively fight is because I am concerned if they would be able to return to their old lives when they returned to Japan. Killing is… , I don't want you to become accustomed to that."

"…"

"Nagumo-kun, you have your own sense of values, your choice for the future is your own. In addition, you don't have the obligation to hear the words from sensei's mouth. But sensei thinks that no matter what kind of future you choose, the way of living which casts others away, other than those important to you… is a truly "lonely" one. Surely, that way of living will not make you and the ones important to you happy. If you wish for happiness, at least for those within your reach… please don't forget how to sympathize with them. From the very beginning, that's the important and priceless thing you once had… so don't throw it away."

One by one, Aiko spun words filled with her feelings, and she tried to convey all of them in front of Hajime. The leaders of the town and even the students heard Aiko's words in silence. Especially the students. They looked down as if they were scolded as they felt bad they got carried away by their power. At the same time, because Aiko was serious about bringing them back even now, and even thought about how they'd live afterwards. With newfound feelings, they could be seen smiling happily as if something tickled them.

For Hajime, even if he crossed the worlds, no matter what the situation would be and even if the students had completely changed. Aiko who didn't even deviate from a "teacher" made him smile wryly inside. It wasn't out of contempt, but admiration. Aiko was treated special because of her rare value. She didn't experience Hajime's hardships, so he'd easily refute her with "Even though you don't know anything!," or "Don't spout things as if you know them!" In a way it's just like what Aiko had said, her words were "light."

But, Hajime couldn't do that. Even now the "teacher" was looking straight at him, so to refute them as "light" words would be too unsightly. Moreover, Aiko hadn't even once pressured him about the "right" thing to do. All of her words were only for the sake of wishing for Hajime's future and happiness.

Hajime immediately turned his gaze towards Yue at Aiko's side. Yue somehow looked at Aiko as if feeling nostalgic. However, when she noticed Hajime's gaze, she immediately matched him straight with a serene gaze. Her eyes said that she'd adhere to whatever answer Hajime gave.

Inside the Abyss, she was his precious person who held his humanity right before he "fell," that's why Hajime certainly wished for her happiness. He thought it'd be okay if he did it by himself, but if he were to believe Aiko's words, Hajime's way of life wouldn't be able to make Yue happy.

When he changed his gaze further, he found the rabbit-eared girl who looked at him worriedly. Towards his world which narrowed to only Yue and him, she was the girl who brought liveliness. No matter how many times Hajime treated her unkindly, she desperately chased after him curiously, and now she was just like Yue, someone he loved as a friend and companion. For Hajime to accept Shia, didn't it bring happiness to Yue?

For Hajime, this world was like a prison. A cage that obstructed him from returning to his hometown. Therefore, it was extremely difficult for him to accept the people and everything in this world. Inside the Abyss, he discarded everything for the sake of returning, it wouldn't be an easy thing to change the sense of values carved in his mind which wouldn't forgive those who obstructed him. But even if it was difficult to "sympathize with other people," he could do it. As a result, his precious things… if that'd bring happiness to Yue and Shia, he wouldn't be that stingy to pitch in and help.

Hajime didn't agree to all of Aiko's words. Even so, it was a serious "scolding" from "his teacher." To disregard it as nonsense would be too childish. WIth this time's rampage, the possibility of the trouble of Hajime's existence being published would suddenly become bigger, but it'd be okay to work hard as just "Aiko-sensei"'s student. Whatever he chose, he already knew he'd be marked sooner or later. He had prepared to strike all of the troublesome things, he decided not to respect this world. That's why it wouldn't be bad to flashily show off his power.

With that, he thought a while for an excuse, then Hajime looked at Aiko again.

"… Sensei, no matter what happens after this, are you still my teacher?"

What Hajime implied was if she'd be his ally.

"Of course."

Towards that, Aiko replied without hesitating.

"… Whatever my decision? That's, even if the result isn't what sensei hoped?"
"That doesn't have to be said. Sensei's role isn't to decide the students' future. I'll just help to make a better decision. Nagumo-kun has heard sensei's talk, so I won't refute your decision"

Hajime watched Aiko for a while to confirm whether there was a lie in her words. For him to intentionally have such commitment was because Hajime himself didn't want to become hostile towards Aiko. After he confirmed there's neither lie nor deception in Aiko's eyes, Hajime turned towards the entrance. Yue and Shia immediately followed after him.

"Na-Nagumo-kun?"

Seeing such a Hajime, Aiko panickedly called him. Hajime looked back, he shrugged his shoulders and replied, having been beaten by Aiko's "teacher style."

"As expected, to take on a huge crowd of tens of thousands as opponents, I'll need some time to prepare. Continue your discussion without me."

"Nagumo-kun!"

Aiko's face shone because of Hajime's reply. Hajime could only smile wryly at such an Aiko.

“It is advice from the best “teacher” I’ve ever known. Moreover, if it’s connected to these girls’ happiness… I only need to consider it a bit. Anyway, I’ll just kick those guys around for now.”

As he said that, he patted Yue and Shia’s shoulder, then once again he turned his heels and went out of the room. Yue and Shia raised a truly joyful atmosphere, and began to run after Hajime in small steps.

*Patan*, the sound of the door being closed, the leaders of the town who shut their mouth after being drowned by the atmosphere between Aiko and Hajime, and immediately asked about the situation from Aiko.

Aiko, whose shoulders were shaken, stared at the door which Hajime went out of. Her face didn’t transmit any joy towards Hajime. What she said to Hajime were Aiko’s true feelings, that his way of life was a sad one.

But, in the end, there’s no denying that she made an important student confront an army of demonic beasts. While she said she didn’t want them to grow accustomed to using their power, she was conscious of the contradiction she’d made by sending him off to fight. She thought she wanted Hajime to rethink his way of life, but she also thought of wanting to help the townspeople of Ul. As a result, both of them seemed to be fulfilled… but she wanted to search for better ways. Aiko secretly let her shoulders droop because of her helplessness as a teacher.

She prayed, for all of her students to not lose their hearts, and to return to their homes… but, Aiko’s wish couldn’t be fulfilled. After hearing Hajime’s story last night, Aiko herself felt that her wishes were already just an illusion. However, she couldn’t stop wishing for it.

Surrounded by the leaders who raised a ruckus and the students who looked at her in respect and affection, Aiko didn’t realize she let out a sigh.

By the way, Tio who had come to the town hall with Hajime and his party muttered, “Although this one is an important witness… i-is this neglect play… as expected of Mas—”, with a flushed expression, and she was naturally ignored.